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NEW LIBERTY BAPTIST CHURCH, KENTUCKY



CANE RUN BAPTIST CHURCH, KENTUCKY

(See pages 189-192)

# OUR CHURCH LIFE

SERVING GOD ON GOD'S PLAN

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"The church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood. The house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth."

J. M. FROST

Author, Pedobaptism; Is It From Heaven or of Men? Moral Dignity of Baptism; The Memorial Supper of Our Lord; An Experience of Grace.

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SUNDAY SCHOOL BOARD  
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NASHVILLE, TENNESSEE



To  
The Churches

Which I Served as Pastor:

Daysville, Ky.; Upper Street, Lexington, Ky.;  
Staunton, Va.; Selma, Ala.; Leigh Street, Richmond, Va.,  
and The First, Nashville. Tenn.,

My Joy  
My Crown of Rejoicing

This Volume  
Is Gratefully Subscribed

## AS TO ITS PURPOSE

This book emphasizes the individual church member, and concerns the local church in its organic life and as the only embodiment of organized Christianity. The title and subtitle go to the very heart of its meaning — *Church Life; or Serving God on God's Plan*. The purpose is to magnify the church as God's creation, his own chosen instrument and method of extending his kingdom among men. And church membership is given distinguished worth, as having high rank and dignity of character among human relationships, and as commanding the attention of all who would serve God on God's plan. As these high ends are accomplished the whole purpose of the book shall be fulfilled.

J. M. FROST.

Nashville, Tenn., August, 1909.



## TABLE OF CONTENTS

---

1. What a Church Stands for .....	7
2. The Church in the Thought of God.....	21
3. The Church of God at Corinth.....	36
4. The Church and Its One Book.....	52
5. The Church and Its Ordinances.....	69
6. How the Denominations Came.....	86
7. The Confession of Faith.....	104
8. Why Join the Church.....	122
9. Why Join the Baptist Church.....	140
10. The Church and Its Public Services.....	158
11. Your Membership in the Church.....	175
12. The Church of Your Membership.....	193
13. The Church and the Commonwealth.....	211
14. Church Life and Church Loyalty.....	232
15. The Enrichment of Church Life.....	250

## AMONG THE GOLDEN CANDLESTICKS

THE seven stars are the angels of the seven churches: and the seven candlesticks which thou sawest, are the seven churches. These things saith he that holdeth the seven stars in his right hand, who walketh in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks.

He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches: To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the midst of the paradise of God:

To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the hidden manna, and will give him a white stone, and in the stone a new name written, which no man knoweth saving he that receiveth it.

All the churches shall know that I am he which searcheth the reins and hearts. . . . He that overcometh the same shall be clothed in white raiment; and I will not blot his name out of the book of life, but I will confess his name before my Father, and before his angels.

Hold fast that which thou hast, that no man take thy crown. Him that overcometh will I make a pillar in the temple of my God; and he shall go no more out; and I will write upon him the name of my God and the city of my God. . . . Behold, I stand at the door and knock; if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me. To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne. He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches.

## CHAPTER I.

### WHAT A CHURCH STANDS FOR.

**T**HIS chapter indicates the teaching of this book, and somewhat its scope and purpose. The aim throughout is to give an exalted view of what is usually called the local or individual church of Christ. The distinctiveness of its character, the uniqueness of its mission, its wonderful history in the world from century to century—these things give the church of Christ exceptional and royal standing. It carries within itself its own badge of honor. Its life, like the life of the individual Christian and through its aggregate membership, must justify its high claim before the world. Its doctrine and work among men are its credential from the King.

Membership in the church is full of meaning; it is of exceptional honor, and calls for the noblest life. What Christ thinks of the individual Christian, what Christ thinks also of the individual church, like the church at Ephesus, for example, is of much moment, and serves as a standard for measurement and rating. Paul, with a great heart, said: "Christ loved me and gave himself for me;" and also to the Ephesians, "Christ loved the church, and gave himself for the church."

The inspired writers everywhere speak of the individual churches in a most commanding way. We do well to follow their example, thinking their thoughts and using their words. The New Testament is the only resource for instruction in our study of church life. Throughout its pages great emphasis is given the individual Christian, and great emphasis also marks the individual church with its aggregate of individual members wrought into organic oneness. *Individuality*, whether of church or member, is never lost sight of, or merged into the mass; but is rather honored and magnified; and *the churches* never become "The Church." The individual is God's unit; the church is his aggregation of individuals saved by his grace; but God has no aggregation of churches—except he will gather all into one at the final consummation.

Paul wrote one of his greatest letters to the church at Ephesus—a church founded by his preaching, and fostered through his ministrations. It ranked high among the very best of the whole list of churches in the New Testament record. He had seen it come into its place of mighty power in that famous city, had seen it slowly but surely undermining and even supplanting the great Temple of Diana, had suffered and wept and rejoiced in his labors there as he saw this church becoming more and more an illustrious example of what the Gospel of Christ could do. This

church, like some others, indeed, was in his heart to the day of his death. His letter to the church is a love letter, rich and strong in thought, lofty and commanding in expression.

Take the following passage for example. It stirs our hearts even now after all these years, and is a letter for all times and any people who love his Lord. It is entered here not for a text, but for a kind of general setting of what is to follow as to spirit and purpose :

#### AN APOSTOLIC ESTIMATE.

Wherefore I also, after I heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus, and love unto all the saints, cease not to give thanks for you, making mention of you in my prayers; that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give unto you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him; the eyes of your understanding being enlightened, that ye may know what is the hope of his calling, and what the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints; and what is the exceeding greatness of his power to usward who believe, according to the working of his mighty power;

Which he wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead, and set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places, far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world,



but also in that which is to come; and hath put all things under his feet, and gave him to be the head over all things to the church, which is his body, the fullness of him that filleth all in all.

But God who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, and hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus; that in the ages to come he might show the exceeding riches of his grace, in his kindness toward us through Christ Jesus; for we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them.

Christ is the head of the church; and he is the Saviour of the body; . . . the church is subject unto Christ; . . . Christ also loved the church and gave himself for it; . . . that he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing, but that it should be holy and without blemish.

Now unto him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us; unto him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages.

These lofty utterances were written under the sway of God's Spirit, and are Paul's masterful grouping of simple and yet wonderful words.

There are groups within groups, like constellation within constellation, which shine with celestial splendor. Take these three for example: God, the Father of glory; the Lord Jesus Christ whom he raised from the dead; the church, which is his body, the fullness of him and the glory of him.

In the Apostle's mind and heart, and he did not hesitate to say so when pouring out his soul to the elders at Miletus, the church at Ephesus was "the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood;" or when writing to Timothy, the church at Ephesus was "the house of God, the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth." This was indeed high rating and ranking for the church at Ephesus, but holds good also for the other churches of the New Testament, or one of our country churches hid away in the mountain fastness. It holds good, too, as a standard for the church of Christ today in whatever community it may be located. There stands the church of Christ, whether then or now, whether Ephesus or Nashville, still the church of God which he purchased with his own blood, the house of God, the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth.

#### THE CHURCH AND THE CHURCH HOME.

For the present, at least, we need not discriminate too closely even between the church-building and the church-body, between the house of wor-

ship and those who gather there, between the members in their organic life and their church-home. Indeed, the house in the eyes of the world easily partakes of the name and purpose, of even the uses to which it is put and their significance, and is the ever-present symbol of the people who gather there to worship within its walls. The log cabin in which Lincoln was born shines in the splendor of his life and achievements, in the eyes of the nation. The church-home may emphasize in powerful and glorious fashion what the church-people stand for.

At the dedication of the Temple, "The glory of the Lord filled the house of the Lord." And the church-home, whether ordinary or imposing in structure, easily becomes identified with the church itself and gives testimony and emphasis to all which it represents. Their house of worship is the house of the Lord. I wish this high view, which surely is not overdrawn, could make us think more highly of the place where we assemble for worship and in which we have our church-home. That is where God in signal way has written his name, and where his honor and glory dwelleth.

The churches of Christ, considered severally and individually, stand for all the Son of God stood for, each in its own place and always for the same thing. Changing countries and centuries make no difference here. Changes come, of

course, in methods of work and in environment, but never in the essential and basal purpose of the church. Those churches whose life is recorded in the New Testament all stood for one and the same thing. And so it is today, and in this sense surely we are their successors, if our churches are moving in their appointed sphere and in fulfillment of their high function.

They stand for Christ and all that he is and has done. The church, like the individual Christian, is the salt of the earth; is the light of the world; is a city that is set on an hill and cannot be hid; and has the glorious privilege of letting its light so shine before men that they may see the good works and glorify God. We have never yet realized the full meaning, or the honor and distinction, or the responsibility and opportunity of membership in the church of Christ. We need to walk humbly here, and yet with our faces to the stars. It is this membership which we are to make worth while, and which by our very life must be commended to men everywhere. We honor Christ by honoring his church; we bless the world in making a membership that is commensurate with its high station.

#### GOD'S VOICE IN THE WORLD.

A church stands for God in Christ and for the kingdom of God among men. This is distinct and basal in its very structure. Nature is a reve-

lation of God. But in the church, in his making of the church, there is additional revelation of himself; this revelation in a way is of higher order, of clearer and greater fullness of meaning. Herein is his personality seen; herein also are clearly seen the greater wonder of his Being, his love and mercy, his pardon and the marvelous working of his grace in saving sinners and making them fit subjects for the heavenly courts.

The stars shine in splendor with his glory; but in the church, made up of those redeemed by the blood of his Son and rich in the experience of his saving grace, may be seen "the manifold wisdom of God," and the revelation of "the mystery of his will." The church, individually or collectively, is not the custodian of grace, nor the dispenser of grace, and yet is itself a wonderful exhibit, repeated over and over again through the centuries, of the actual working of God in giving his Son for the world's redemption. And in this sense the church outshines all the splendors of the firmament in declaring his glory, and in bearing testimony for God among men.

Its members were dead in sin; but God made them alive again and raised them up with Christ, making them sit together in heavenly places. They are new creatures—a new creation indeed in Christ Jesus—God having made them anew in the working of his grace; "for we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus, unto good



works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them."

Moreover, "he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him"—this great foundation-truth has constant and tremendous emphasis in the services of the church. Its worship is the worship of God, who is glorious in holiness, fearful in praises, doing wonders. In receiving members the church declares what God hath wrought in the working of his grace; in its ordinations, whether of deacons or of preachers, while imparting nothing of grace or gift, the church yet recognizes God's choice and declares his call of these men; its very house of worship has become the house of God; its ordinances are declarative of what God has done; and its preaching of the gospel is but proclaiming the kingdom of God as his mighty witness among the nations of the earth. These things in its life and work and ordinances, make the church a voice for God. They are the people of God, having their church-home in the house of God, and are serving for his honor and glory.

#### THE CHURCH AND ITS ONE BOOK.

A church stands for the Bible as God's Book and the embodiment of Christ's teaching. It is a revelation of himself, and here as our only source of wisdom we learn his will and ways. We

need diligently to study the church and its book—the Bible, the Holy Scriptures. As viewed by the church in its belief and life, the Scriptures were written by men divinely inspired; have God for their Author, salvation for their end, and truth without mixture of error for their matter; are the true center of Christian Union, and the supreme standard by which all human conduct, creeds and opinions should be judged.

The church is itself an interpretation of the Scriptures. A Baptist church is the Baptist interpretation of the Scriptures, especially of the New Testament, and is at once both a result and support of that interpretation. Christians differ in the matter of interpretation, and as a result there are different denominations. But the Scriptures, as one may read and study for himself, are the only sufficient and satisfactory basis to determine his church relation and membership. Holding a Baptist interpretation as a personal belief justifies and requires membership in a Baptist church. I have said *the New Testament especially*, not as against the Old Testament in any sense, but simply because the church is an organization exclusively of the New Testament. And concerning the church as to its nature, ordinances, missions, members, and indeed for everything pertaining to its life, the New Testament is our only guide and our one authority.

Loyalty to the Scriptures is of supreme moment both with the church and with the individual Christian. Loyalty is a composite thought or sentiment—love and law—the law of love and love under the regulation of law. Loyalty to Christ means loyalty to the things which are his—his teaching, his church, with its ordinances, mission and ministers; it means loyalty to the New Testament; and true loyalty to the New Testament means loyalty to Christ.

We know nothing of Christ historically except as we know him through the Scriptures, and especially the New Testament, directly or indirectly. In the name of our God we lift up our banner, and our banner is the Word of God. And wherever you find a church, this is what it stands for, whether now or in the New Testament period, whether at Ephesus or in some modern city or village or country retreat. We do well to insist on this, and make our loyalty known to all men.

*A church stands for saving the world.* Christ saves men individually, then groups them into churches, and sets them to save the world. This is its high mission, and everything must be subservient to this. Our Lord said to his Father, "As thou hast sent me into the world, so send I them into the world;" and to his disciples he said, "As the Father hath sent me into the world, so send I you into the world."

## FINAL TRIUMPH IN REDEMPTION.

Like the Lord and Saviour himself, the church gives itself for the world—*not to the world*, that would be for the marring of the one and the ruin of the other, but for the world and for the world's saving. The church in its highest mission is a rescue party, a life-saving service. That church is mightiest which excels in evangelizing the world. While a church wishes a preacher with converting power, the preacher also wishes a church with converting power. There is general need for converting power in the pulpit, but converting power also in the pew.

This gives a church preëminent distinction. It stands for the work of redemption, for the cross and the crucified One. Its mission is to carry the good news of salvation to the uttermost parts of the earth. The members having themselves been saved through riches of grace, the church sets itself to the glorious purpose for which Jesus died—the saving of lost and ruined men for the kingdom of God.

A church, moreover, stands for final triumph and glorious consummation—the triumph of saving the lost, the consummation of bringing in the kingdom of our Lord. The church is an ever abiding prophecy of coming coronation, and will not be hushed in its song. It is at once a standing protest of the deadly work of sin, and a

declaration of coming redemption and freedom in Christ Jesus.

The church declares life for the dead and resurrection for the buried. In the final triumph there shall be no more death and no more dying. Death contrary to the seeming is no challenge or mockery of the church; but the church in its might and courage, with its house of worship standing near where the dead are buried, boldly proclaims the coming end of death. Oh, the heroic daring and faith that cuts into the very rock which marks the grave, the everlasting words of the everlasting King! "I will raise him up at the last day." The very funeral itself for which the church assembles in sorrowful memory of those who die in the Lord, is a prophecy of the final funeral when death, the last enemy, shall be destroyed and there shall be no more dying—the funeral of death. There shall be a new heaven and a new earth with Christ as King of kings and Lord of lords.

The church sings its songs of victory even when and where the battle is fiercest. Defeat today will only mean triumph tomorrow; death today means life and resurrection tomorrow. This is the word that is ever going forth from the church of Jesus Christ. The church militant is the promise of the church triumphant, the potency and power of the coming kingdom.

Such is, somewhat, the meaning of the church,

and surely it gives distinction to the house, however humble, as the place where we meet and worship. There should be with us a feeling of care and concern for the church-home which is our Bethel, and which itself stands for all we hold dear in its high and glorious service as the meeting place for the saints of God. Mount Vernon, the shrine of human liberty, shares the renown of the nation's greatest chieftain as the Washington home. Why may not our church-home as the place of worship share the distinction of *the church* which gathers there and for which the Lord of glory died? It was this double thought that created the great church hymn:

I love thy kingdom, Lord,  
The *house* of thine abode;  
The church our blest Redeemer saved  
With his own precious blood.

I love thy church, O God,  
Her *walls* before thee stand,  
Dear as the apple of thine eye,  
And graven on thy hand.

Beyond my highest joy,  
I prize her heavenly ways,  
Her sweet communion, solemn vows,  
Her hymns of love and praise.

Behold, the heavens, and the heaven of heavens cannot contain thee; how much less this house which we have builded! And yet, surely God is in this place, and this is none other than the house of God, and the gate of heaven.

## CHAPTER II.

### THE CHURCH IN THE THOUGHT OF GOD.

**W**HERE did the church come from? This question points to the beginning of individual churches, not of "The Church" as the phrase goes, and which is purely a growth in history much this side of the New Testament period and contrary to both the teaching and spirit of the New Testament. The question of when the church began is similar to the question of the beginning of the family. Where did the family come from—as to its starting, its nature and plan, its purpose and history? Where did the stars come from? and the flowers? and the fields? These all have a common source and a common answer in the opening verse of the Bible—in many respects the most remarkable single statement in human speech—"In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth."

The church is here because, like the family, God thought it, planned it after his own choosing, commanded it through his own appointed agencies, and set it for the high mission of working out his providence and grace. God's appointment of agencies in his moral government is, perhaps, even more conspicuous and commanding than the

creation of material things and his direction of their course by established laws. Like a building in the thought of an architect prior to its erection and prior even to its appearance in drawing on paper, so the church was in God's mind before its operation or even appearance among men. This fact gives emphasis and dignity to its character, and shows its true place and rank among the forces which make for righteousness.

God thought the stars, and the stars emerged, coming in glory and studding the heavens as sentinels of the night; God thought the flowers, and the flowers emerged, coming through seed and soil; God thought the family, created man in his own image as a living soul, gave to him a helpmeet, commanded marriage, and the family emerged with the solitary set in families for the blessing of the race; God thought the church, and in the fullness of time Christ came, as the unspeakable gift of God's love for man's redemption from the ruin which sin had wrought, and then the church emerged, began its blessed career surcharged with the mighty forces of God, was greatly multiplied from one to many, and to this good day has held its glorious mission and commission for saving the world.

It is entirely scriptural and accordant with all the facts, to count the church as emanating from the creative energy of God. Concerning the mountains and the stars and all created things,



God spoke the word and it was done; so concerning the church, as concerning the family also, God commanded and these came into being—the family first in point of time and then the church taking its place as God's creation and appointment for the good of mankind and his glory among men. "For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them." And, "If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature (or a new creation); old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new."

The coming of John the Baptist marked a turning point in the affairs of men, and in the history of the human race. He was the immediate forerunner of Christ as others had been more remotely; and his preaching prepared the way of the Lord for the coming of the church. When he began his preaching in the wilderness there was no church; there had been no church; he faced a world without a church. God from the first, indeed, had not left himself without a witness in the world and witnesses. There was the individual, men and women, who honored him in their devotion and worship; there was the family, multiplying and succeeding each other throughout the centuries, in which his name was written and where his glory dwelt; there was the nation also whose people were his chosen people who served him with ever-varying moods

and conditions, and who worked out his purpose among the nations of the earth. There was all this, and with a meaning of tremendous moment, *but no church.*

#### A PART IN GOD'S GREAT PLAN.

The coming of the church as a distinct movement of God's grace was reserved until the coming of Christ. He brought in the new dispensation, and with him came the new order of things—the outgrowth and fulfillment of the old. He stood at the new opening in the highway of human history and spoke that creative word of assertive power and prophetic vision, “I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.” The Old Testament period was behind him with all its manifest marks of God's presence and care, but our Lord was bringing in a new period, and setting in operation new forces, and making new history which would make possible and necessary the New Testament.

He entered his public ministry through an ordinance new then, but thenceforward to be perpetuated among those who love him—the ordinance of baptism, as seen in his immersion in the Jordan. When he began there was no church—no church at Jerusalem, nor in Judea, nor in Asia, nor in Europe, nor anywhere in all the world. It was his to build, and he did the building. He found no church here, but left a church behind

him, which he himself had founded and entrusted with his truth and ordinances, and which he commissioned with the mighty task of giving the gospel to the world, and of making his name great among the nations of the earth. He has continued his church just as he made the one at the first, by saving men and gathering them into churches, for the fulfillment of his mission and the inbringing of his kingdom.

So surely as God planned the heavens and set the stars in their places, whether fixed or moving, so surely did he devise and has in process of execution the plan of human redemption. He chose the gospel as his means and the church as his instrument, and he himself in the person of the Holy Spirit is ever present as the efficient cause in saving the lost. He draws men unto himself, makes them willing in the day of his power, and works in them to will and to do according to his good pleasure.

When God created the universe he did not retire and leave the universe to run itself. Everything moves at his bidding as everything came into being at his call, whether the lily that blooms in the field, or the tiny sparrow that feeds from his hand and has his care in its fall, or the stars marshalling in splendor to the music of the spheres around his great throne. And as he is ever present in nature guiding things after the ways of his will, so also in the saving of men he

works out the wonders of his purpose through riches of grace in Christ Jesus.

This is the meaning, at least in part, of those mighty words of inspiration. In their sweep of thought and expression they encompass the ages; they look backward to the first movements of his grace, and forward to its finished work and final consummation. "For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ." "He hath delivered us from the power of darkness and translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son;" "that in the dispensation of times he might gather into one all things in Christ." And whom he did foreknow he did also predestinate, and call, and justify and glorify. And he who hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ, in whom we have redemption through his blood; that in the ages to come he might show the exceeding riches of his grace toward us through Christ, in whom also we have obtained an inheritance among the saints.

This is the teaching everywhere throughout his word as to the fullness of his plan and the working of his purpose. Note the wonderful word which he has left upon record for our instruction:

"God according to his abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively hope, . . . to an inherit-

ance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you, who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last day.

“The God and father of our Lord Jesus Christ hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in Christ; according as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love.

“I was made a minister, according to the gift of the grace of God, . . . to preach the unsearchable riches of Christ, . . . to make all men see what is the fellowship of the mystery, . . . to the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in the heavenly places might be known, by the church, the manifold wisdom of God; according to the eternal purpose which he purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord. . . . Unto him be glory in the church throughout all ages.”

Surely it becomes us, much more than is common, to think largely of God, to follow in our thinking back to his thinking, to recognize his abiding presence and preëminence in redemption. For as he hath set the solitary in families, so also he hath set the saved in churches, and made the church the embodiment of his work of grace and the expression of his kingdom among men.

#### THE PRICE WHICH GOD PAID.

Nor is this all, for there is yet another view which shows the surpassing greatness of the church in the thought of God, and emphasizes its distinctive character as God’s chosen method and

instrument, viz.: *its purchase price*. Its cost was infinite, but was freely paid. When creating the world, or even when constructing worlds and systems, there was on God's part only the expenditure of power coupled with infinite wisdom. But there is an amazing difference when he planned to create men anew and redeem them from ruin. This involved much more and required infinite demand on the infinite richness of his nature, and represents the price which God paid for human redemption in Christ.

For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son; and God commended his love toward us in that while we were yet sinners Christ died for us. Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins; and we are accepted in the Beloved, in whom dwelleth all the fullness of the Godhead bodily, and who of God, through his death on the cross, is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption. For it pleased the Father that in him should all fullness dwell, and we are complete in him.

Such is God's plan, and such also the outworking of his purpose and the fullness of his saving grace. Having given his Son to die on the cross, God also raised him from the dead by the exceeding greatness of his power, and set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places; he gave

him also a name above every other name as the one only Saviour of lost men; put all things under his feet, and made him to be the head over all things to the church which is his body, the fullness of him that filleth all in all.

Herein is the preëminent distinction of the church on earth, because of Christ's preëminent distinction in the heavens, and also because of his own exalted personal relation to the church even as now operating through men and among men. What Christ is to the church and in the church makes it today what it is, both to God on the one hand and to men on the other.

For this reason, too, the church even now, as with the church at Ephesus, is called the church of God which he hath purchased with his own blood—the house of God, the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth; and is also called the church of Christ which he loved and for which he gave himself to die, and for which he holds the scepter of righteousness that he may present it to himself a glorious church.

God's plan and purpose named the purchase price, which Christ freely paid in the shedding of his blood on the cross. This price is of infinite worth and of unwasting fullness.

Thou dying Lamb, thy precious blood  
 Shall never lose its power  
 Till all the ransomed church of God  
 Be saved to sin no more.



Such is the confident song of the redeemed, both on earth and in heaven, the boast of their faith and the joy of their hope. The glory of Christ is upon the church—upon the church of today as upon the church of God which was at Corinth or Ephesus. It is the glory of the crown, and has the renown of the cross, the crimson flow of whose fountain is for redemption and cleansing. And what the church is to Christ makes it inexpressibly great, gives it a singular rank among men, and commands of us the best we can give of honor and praise and service. We honor him in doing honor to what is his. We magnify and glorify Christ in magnifying and glorifying his church, which he hath purchased with his own blood.

#### EMPHASIZING THE INDIVIDUAL CHURCH.

Other considerations could be presented which would show further the greatness of the church in the thought of God. And these, too, would again indicate the worth and force of church membership, and should quicken our devotion and loyalty. But leaving these for future discussion, we press the importance and urgent need of giving fresh emphasis to the individual church and the individual member. Consecrated individuality is a mighty power for God, whether the one church or the one member. The church is for the saved, and is their opportunity to coöperate



with God in saving the world. One may so make his church life a service for God, that his church life in turn will crown him with the blessing and the glory of God.

The church, as God's chosen method of operation, is for the making of a kingdom—a kingdom not of this world though in the world with Christ as King. This is the office and function of every church wherever located. And every member has a place of rank and efficiency in the fulfillment of this great mission. With every church and with every member there is the hindering or helping, the marring or making, as each one may choose for himself. It is for him if he will to share in the glory of the coming kingdom and in the coronation of the King.

It is not "The Church," mark you, whatever that term may mean in common use, that does this mighty work for God, but *the church* which we almost belittle by calling it the "local church," but which God has made great as his chosen instrument and endowed with power to this high end. There is much need that we reconstruct our use of words and make them conform to the New Testament meaning and usage.

The family and the church have much in common as divine institutions, and are used in scripture to illustrate each other. The family had its rise in Eden, is of God's appointment, and stands

to this day for his moral government among men; the church had its rise with the coming of Christ and through his death on the cross; it, too, is of God's workmanship created in Christ Jesus, and stands now, as it has always stood, for the kingdom of his grace in the world. It abides through the centuries, and will yet abide, as an institution with a membership of the saved and set to save others. And so its building goes on from one to others with the passing years.

The word church, like the word family, has specific meaning, but also a generic sense and a generic use. An individual church, like an individual family, may pass away—many thousands of them have passed away when their work had been finished, and are among the things that were. But the church, like the family again, is God's institution, and remains because God has given it remaining power. With him is its increase and growth, whatever human agencies he may use. He brings on new forces, as when Paul plants and Apollos waters, and new churches follow in the place of those passing away and in further conquest for Christ. In this way the line has been unbroken, and from the first until now the Lord has added unto the church those who are saved. The local and incidental will pass away, but the essential is permanent and will stand until the end comes.

MADE TO PERSIST THROUGH HIS KEEPING.

The *persistence of the church* commands our attention and awakens our song. The church persists because of the keeping power of God, and is in line with the fulfillment of his promise. The saints persevere, but God preserves. Persistence of the church and preservation of the saints are from God. And this word *persistence*, as describing the life of the church, is preferable in my judgment to the words succession and perpetuity—the *persistence* of the church through the ages. This word has the basal and essential meaning of the other words, but is free from historical entanglements and present day misconceptions.

Centuries have passed and yet, like the family again, the church is here, and still stands along the way of triumph, regardless of local failures and human perversion and corruption of the truth as it is in Jesus.

God set out to make his church, and through his church to make a kingdom. He hath wrought continuous deliverance, and has promised deliverance which shall be complete and permanent. In him is final triumph, to be consummated in the glorious destiny of the church. God is in the midst of her and she shall not be moved; God shall help her and that right early.

Thy saints in all this glorious war  
Shall conquer though they die;  
They see the triumph from afar,  
And seize it with their eye.

When that illustrious day shall rise  
And all thine armies shine,  
In robes of victory through the skies,  
The glory shall be thine.

This is the triumphant sentiment and song which the devout have sung through centuries. What hath God wrought for those who love him! And the crowning day is yet to come, both for the individual Christian and for the church of the first born, whose names are written in heaven. That day of glorious destiny for man redeemed by the blood is fixed in the calendar of God, and standeth sure. The kingdom shall come; the coronation of the King shall follow; God will show what he hath wrought in Christ for human redemption; and there shall be a new heaven and a new earth for the mighty throng of blood-washed and glorified.

The Presbyterian catechism has the question, "What is the chief end of man?" And gives the great answer: "The chief end of man is to glorify God and to enjoy him forever." How true this is! And yet, when one knows through blessed experience the saving power of God's grace, and contemplates the glorious destiny into which he brings the redeemed, and considers all

that God has done for human redemption, the thought is overpowering, and we almost venture the word, that the chief end of God is to glorify man, and to enjoy him forever. Such is the glory of the church as the workmanship of God, and like the starry heaven in declaring his glory—glorious now, but more glorious far when the work of grace is done.

## CHAPTER III.

### THE CHURCH OF GOD AT CORINTH.

WHAT has gone before, as showing our church life in its essential meaning and character, here finds confirmation, and is illustrated in the specific case of the church of God which was at Corinth. There is great loss of directness and force in our speaking of "The Church," as for example in the phrase "Church and State," as though the church were an indefinite something without meaning, local presence or organic life. The church of God, as emphasized here, is an organization, local, very definite and complete in character. It has the common purpose of other churches of God in other places, and is set for the kingdom of our Lord. The more thoroughly we get this idea, the more pronounced and commanding will our church membership be in loyalty and life, and in serving God on God's plan.

The history of the church at Corinth, as one of the churches of the New Testament, is briefly and vividly told in Acts, 18: 1-18; and much of its character and life appears in the two Corinthian letters. Those letters both open with a

salutation to the church, with practically the same meaning, the first being as follows :

Paul, called to be an apostle of Jesus Christ through the will of God, and Sosthenes our brother ; unto the church of God which is at Corinth, to them that are sanctified in Christ Jesus called to be saints, with all that in every place call upon the name of Jesus Christ our Lord, both theirs and ours ; grace be unto you and peace, from God our Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ.

These words disclose mighty forces at work with wonderful results. God our Father, Jesus Christ our Lord, Paul the apostle and preacher by the will of God, and the sanctified called to be saints in organic oneness as the church of God—these all are new and mighty words, or rather old words with new meaning to the cultured Greeks. The greeting describes the church of God as to its founding and character, its culture and growth in that heathen city. It shows the extension of Christ's kingdom and its conquest in the hearts and lives of those people. The church was not the kingdom but the manifestation of its presence and life, of its flower, fruitage and fragrance as the garden of the Lord.

#### THE CHURCH ONE AS THE FAMILY IS ONE.

As an institution which God has set among men, the church in its generic sense is only one and always the same, as with the family. But

the one soon became many, multiplying and reproducing itself in specific churches. In the first sense we speak of the church, but in the latter sense of churches, and yet must think of them as being each one complete in itself and having the same high mission. And each church by itself is properly the church of Christ which he loved and gave himself for, as the church at Antioch, in which the Holy Spirit was present in directing power, or the church of God at Ephesus which he purchased with his own blood; and with each one, too, though having local designation, there is the fullness of church significance and honor, of church blessing and responsibility.

We come now to a study of what is called the New Testament church, as to its form and structure, and also as pattern for modern churches and for their comparison and conformity. In such a study it is better, however, in my judgment, to take a concrete case, as the church at Corinth. For when we speak of the New Testament church, we are immediately confronted with the question, which one? There was first one church, as the church at Jerusalem, so the record goes; then more than one, and then many churches, as they increased through the preaching of the gospel.

The New Testament is a history, not however, of any one church, nor yet of an aggregation of



churches to make "The Church" for that period; but rather a history of the rise and progress of Christ's kingdom as it manifested itself and voiced itself among men in the form of churches. Those churches were composed of believers in Christ, the sanctified called to be saints who had heard the preaching of the gospel and believed and were baptized; and who, wrought into organic oneness as a local body, honored Jesus as their Lord and Savior, kept his ordinances and sought the extension of his kingdom. The church at Corinth was one of those churches, not one among the first, possibly not one among the best, and yet a great church, as clearly appears from the record of its life and doctrine and work.

This one local church at Corinth taken by itself is emphasized as being the *church of God*. This does not mean that there were two churches in the city, and one of them was named the Church of God; but that this specific church was the church of God located at Corinth, as others were located in other places. Though limited and marred by local environment, it was yet specifically marked as the church of God, not simply as a name, but as indicating its origin, and character, and allegiance. God was in its making as in the making of his other churches in other cities where the apostles had gone preaching the gospel. It came not by might nor by power, but by the

Spirit of God. It came apparently in the ordinary movements of human affairs, but in fact as the outward gathering of those whose hearts the Lord had opened. It was the public demonstration of his work of grace, a local expression of the kingdom of Christ.

Paul had come to Corinth in his second missionary journey, having passed through Athens, where his labors seemed not to have been very successful. He seemed apprehensive in his new field, not knowing what should befall him in this emporium of commerce, whose people were boastful of human wisdom and corrupt in human sin.

#### GOD AT WORK IN CORINTH.

There were some things, however, to encourage him; he was joined by Silas and Timotheus, his companions in labor, who had come down from Thessalonica to meet him at Corinth. Then came opposition and persecution, with every prospect of failure in their work. But the unseen forces were also taking part in the movement.

Paul was pressed in spirit and testified to the Jews, that Jesus was Christ. . . . Then spake the word of the Lord to Paul in the night by a vision, Be not afraid, but speak and hold not thy peace; for I am with thee, and no man shall set on thee to hurt thee; for I have much people in this city. And he continued there a year and six months, teaching the word of God among them.

The Lord was mindful of Corinth, and Paul here did some of the best work of his life. In one of the letters to this church he characterizes himself and his preaching, and shows the main-spring of his power, and how he was himself a worker together with God. "It pleased God, by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe." He himself had come declaring unto them the testimony of God, and determined to know nothing among them save Jesus Christ and him crucified. "My speech and my preaching was not with enticing words of man's wisdom *but in the demonstration of the Spirit and of power*, that your faith might not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God."

With this mighty herald of the cross there was no mistaking as to the source of his power, or how the church at Corinth came, or why it should be called "*the church of God.*" Always and everywhere, "God giveth the increase," whether in multiplying churches, or in adding to their membership, or in giving them an increase of power.

The church at Corinth was great, not only as being the church of God, but also because of its relation to the kingdom which Christ came to establish. It came in fulfillment of God's thought, which was of old concerning the church, and the working out of his purpose and plan for

the furtherance of the kingdom of Christ. It was his method of conquest and also his plan of service.

Centuries before, word had been given out by the Prophet Daniel, that in the days of coming kings and kingdoms, the God of heaven would set up a kingdom of his own, that his kingdom should never be destroyed, but should break in pieces and consume all other kingdoms, and itself stand forever. That prophecy found fulfillment in the coming of Christ—or rather the beginning of fulfillment to be consummated when in the ages to come he should finish his work and deliver up the kingdom to God the Father.

Christ opened his ministry as did John the Baptist, his great forerunner, with the word: "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." To those who followed him he gave the assuring word: "Fear not, little flock, for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom." In the sacred hour of the upper chamber he gave his disciples the promise that they should sit with him at his table in his kingdom. Before Pilate he made declaration of his kingship: "My kingdom is not of this world." And for all who should come after he left the assertive word: "The gospel of this kingdom shall be preached among all nations for a witness unto them."

## THE EXPRESSION OF THE INVISIBLE.

Christ founded his kingdom, and then for its visible manifestation and expression, and as the chosen method and instrument for its furtherance among men, he made his church, calling into organic oneness those who had been brought into his kingdom by the power of God. And Christ's kingdom, even in this period of its making and extension, is greater than Christ's church—as a man's soul is greater than his body, and the mind the measure of the man. It is greater than the aggregation of all his churches from all countries and centuries. For the kingdom, made up as it is of the redeemed and saved, is also called the family of God, "the whole family in heaven and earth," bearing the name of Christ, and made joint heirs with him.

Church and kingdom, therefore, are different in their meaning; the words are not interchangeable, nor the things themselves identical. Differing radically and essentially, they yet hold wonderful relation to each other, somewhat as spirit and body, and both are of glorious rank and power in the purpose of God. The kingdom is spiritual and universal; the church is local and visible, often marked and marred by human limitations and infirmities; and yet makes manifest the hidden life of the kingdom, and makes visible things which are unseen and eternal.

“The kingdom of God is within you, and cometh not with observation;” “My kingdom is not of this world;” “Except a man be born again he cannot enter—cannot even see the kingdom of God;” “The kingdom of God is not in word, but in power;” “Is not meat and drink, but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit;” “And hope maketh not ashamed; because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Spirit which is given unto us.”

The inner life of individual believers is seen in their outer life. Their joy becomes their song of rejoicing. So the kingdom of grace shows its presence and power through the church by the organic oneness of its members, in their worship and service, and through the church life which they live.

The church at Corinth came through the preaching of the gospel, and was the result of missionary labor. The triumph of the cross among those people was remarkable, and the planting of their church was wonderfully strategic and meant larger things for the kingdom in every way. It was connected with the church at Jerusalem, not organically, of course, but only in a historical way, and even then indirectly and remotely. The connection was through the church of the larger Antioch, and through the churches established by Paul's first missionary journey, thence through those churches estab-

lished in Europe through his second missionary tour.

This is not written in the interest of "Church succession," and has no bearing whatever on any phase of that subject. Indeed it has no significance beyond being of interest in showing how the church came to this city, which itself held a strategic point in the world's commerce and conquest. It shows, also, the method and progress of the kingdom of Christ through preaching the gospel in those early years.

The founding of the church at Corinth was not unlike the founding of the church at Jerusalem, which was the beginning of churches. In the one instance Christ was the preacher, and he came preaching the gospel of the kingdom. He soon had disciples following him, and began the process of building his church. He brought some of them into an organized company, with official relation to himself. We note five remarkable meetings of that little band: (1) In the upper room on the memorable night when the Lord's Supper was established and the Lord himself was betrayed and carried to the cross; (2) When Jesus met with them in the morning of the resurrection, with Thomas absent; and (3) a week later, with Thomas present; (4) on the day he was taken up into heaven when he had "shown himself alive after his passion, by many infallible proofs, being seen of them forty days, and speak-



ing of things pertaining to the kingdom of God"; and (5) when they were assembled again on the morning of Pentecost in perhaps the same upper room, they continued with one accord in prayer, were baptized in the Holy Spirit, and on that day of power had three thousand accessions and baptisms. Following this "The Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved."

#### IN THE SISTERHOOD OF CHURCHES.

Somewhat in the same way Paul as the apostle to the Gentiles entered Corinth as a herald of the cross. It was twenty years after Pentecost and ten years after his own wonderful experience and conversion. Meanwhile, and much through his own labors and suffering, the word of the Lord had increased greatly, the disciples had been multiplied into many many thousands, and churches had been established throughout a wide range of country, including Asia and Asia Minor and Europe to the westward, with Jerusalem still the center and base.

What our Lord had done within the radius of his ministry, Paul did, at least similar in kind, at Corinth—preaching the gospel of the kingdom. The word of the Lord had free course and was glorified. Many believed and turned to the Lord, and the many were baptized and wrought into one and became the church of God which was at Corinth. It came as with a touch of spiritual



power through the preaching of Paul, and they glorified Christ in him. The account is brief and manifestly leaves much untold, but there could be no finer specimen of making the church. It became at once a church of power, mighty in the Lord. Among the charter members were Aquilla with his wife Priscilla, and Crispus, who was chief ruler of the synagogue, with his household, who believed and became obedient unto the faith. And later Sosthenes, who was another ruler of the synagogue, "and many of the Corinthians, hearing, believed and were baptized."

It was a wonderful work of grace. God thought the church at Corinth, and the church at Corinth came to be as the church of God—emerging from that cultured, corrupt, commercial city, as the morning sun, on the far-away horizon of the sea, seems to emerge from the waves in their ceaseless surging. It came as if in response to the call, "Arise, and shine, for thy light is come. For the glory of the Lord is upon thee." This was the making of a church after God's chosen plan and pattern, and serves as an example for all that shall follow.

From thence onward you have the church of God at Corinth; it takes rank in the sisterhood of churches as God's plan of service in revealing his work and ways of grace in the kingdom of his dear Son—even as it was with the church of God at Jerusalem with James the Just as its pastor,

and "the church of the Thessalonians which was in God the Father, and in the Lord Jesus Christ," and "the church at Babylon," from which Simon Peter sent out his letter with greetings to the saints everywhere, and the church of Ephesian saints which "was the house of God, the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth."

These churches were of equal rank, but without organic relation to each other—though doubtless they differed as one star differeth from another star in glory, and yet together shining in the splendor of the firmament. They were, as the New Testament record shows, each of them a separate and complete church, definite and independent in its organic life, but having great common interests and belief and purpose. In their local character they represented the independence of the churches, but also the fellowship of the churches in their coöperative spirit and effort. To them was accorded, each in its own essential nature and work, the distinction of being the church of God. They were set for the glory of God in the fulfillment of his purpose. And in accordance with his plan they had as their renown and privilege a commission from him of universal empire for the kingdom of his Son.

The greatness of the church at Corinth, in part at least, was in the greatness of its mission. And yet it had the same mission as other churches

then and now. There were things which marred its course, but such things as came almost naturally from its environment, and the apostle in his great letters does not fail to censure and even rebuke them for those things. But the same letters reveal and rejoice in the great doctrinal character and life of the church, and in the glorious way in which it worked out its mission.

With convincing clearness and power, as appears in the Corinthian letters, the church at Corinth was at the fore in the great doctrines of the gospel. It was in that distinguished city with a message from God, and to serve him in representing his kingdom among men. It was something new in Corinth, had lately come to that city with new power and blessing, as the church of God had lately come also to other cities in Europe, coming thence from Jerusalem. It marked the purpose of God in saving the lost through the power of the cross, and his plan for the furtherance of his kingdom.

The church at Corinth declared for Christ crucified as the wisdom and power of God to them that are saved, both Jews and Greeks, and also for the kingdom and kingship of Jesus. This was done with such forwardness and force as to provoke the charge that they were "against the decrees of Cæsar, saying that there is another King, one Jesus." The charge was true, though not as intended by their enemies. Christ was

indeed their King, enthroned and glorified; they were of his kingdom, not of this world, and yet a powerful factor in its affairs.

The mission of the church at Corinth, as the mission of every church everywhere, was the fulfillment of Christ's mission, the making and exemplifying of his kingdom in the world. It represented Christ in that city—his life and doctrine, his death and resurrection from the dead, his work of redemption and his saving grace. The noble Greek language was set to a new song, and their rhythmic voice made new music. It was praise unto our God and his Christ, the song of redeeming love which we sing today. This mission and service gave the church a distinction and renown, separated it from everything else and gave it power to impress the people of that celebrated city. To be a member of that church was indeed high honor, and called for a noble life commensurate with its character and purpose.

And the honor of membership in the church of God at Corinth is a standard of measurement and rating for membership in his church today. It shows a new and exalted relation to God, to Christ, to his kingdom in this world, and is charged with the most glorious mission possible to men. Its rank is our rank, its glory is our glory.

And so the gospel of Christ went on conquering and to conquer. Paul returned to Antioch,

whence he had gone out, and having called the church together, declared for himself and those who were with him, "all that God had done with them, and how he had opened the door of faith unto the Gentiles." Likewise on his final visit to Jerusalem and with Corinth in the record, "he declared particularly what things God had wrought among the Gentiles by his ministry. We are in glorious line of succession, with nothing doubtful as to the outcome. Christ's word of promise became history by fulfillment, and then again became a larger prophecy which is being wrought out as the days and centuries go by: "I will build my church and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it."

## CHAPTER IV.

### THE CHURCH AND ITS ONE BOOK.

THE story of Sir Walter Scott, one of the world's great authors, though worn threadbare from use, is still of common interest and point among the thoughtful, because of its fundamental truth. When dying or in a sickness which was unto death, he called for *the book*, and wanted some one to read to him from *the book*. In answer to the question, "Which book?" the charming writer of books made answer: '*There is but one book.*' They brought him the Bible, and read to him from the Bible, as the one book in all the world's great kingdom of literature, that could suffice for the pressing emergency of life and for the infinite need of light on the darkness which lay beyond.

Queen Victoria, who came to England's throne a young, unseasoned girl, but developed into one of the noblest of women, made a ruler for that great empire unexcelled by any predecessors. Her reign for more than half a century is marked as the Victorian Period in English history. It was the period of England's greatness, and she made herself a blessing to her own subjects in both the empire and the colonies, and a

blessing also to the whole world. She was asked for the secret of her successful reign and of the prosperous condition of her dominion. In answer and from her throne she held up the Bible as being in its great principles and forces the cause of England's greatness and the one secret of success in her sceptre and crown—that the Bible maketh for righteousness and righteousness exalteth a nation.

This thing which is true and essential for the individual and for the nation, is also true and essential out of all comparison, to the church. *For the church certainly there is but one book;* that one book is the Bible, the Scriptures of the Old and New Testament wrought into one as the Book of books of all the ages; and by the church is meant the one definite specific church, like the church of God at Corinth, local in character and organic life, though world-wide in its mission and operation. The Bible is indispensable to the church as its guide and its one source of infallible instruction. The physical, mechanical book is a necessary piece of furniture in the church home, and the Bible itself as the word of the Lord, is to the church in no mean sense its life, and light, and salvation. It is the "inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness; that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good work," and

also that the church in its organic life and ministration may be a blessing to the world, an honor to God, the entrance of whose word giveth light.

#### THE COMING OF THE BOOK.

When the new dispensation came there was no New Testament; its Scriptures had not yet been written and its history had not yet been made. The Old Testament, about as we have it now, was the Hebrew Bible—the one word of the Lord in the possession of men. It lay as the foundation of the New Testament, or as the seed planted by the divine hand, out of which the New would grow. The fulfillment of its prophecies furnished the material and made possible the writing of the New. The Old, with its revelation and inspiration, found its completeness and crown of glory in the revelation and inspiration of the New. Taken together, they make the one Book, “the Holy Scriptures which are able to make wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus.”

The Old Testament as the Hebrew Scriptures was Christ’s Bible—his only Bible. It foretold his coming and found fulfillment in him. It was in the Old Testament Scriptures that he was taught and trained in the Hebrew home, as he “increased in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and man.” It was the Old Testament Scriptures, also, which he used with such fine



effect, whether in his private life when resisting the devil, or in his public ministry when teaching the people. That mighty word of his—"it is written" as the word of God—was his one rock of defense, his one sword for aggressive warfare. "Search the Scriptures," was his word of instruction, "for they testify of me, and in them ye think ye have eternal life." Moses and the prophets was a final appeal, the end of controversy between God and man.

The Old Testament entered also very largely into the life and labors of the apostles and those early preachers of the gospel. The words of the old prophets became the text of the new preachers. They learned their lesson from their Lord, and right well did they use the Scriptures as the word of God, being matched and fulfilled in the things which had lately come to pass. This word of prophecy, with a new power of experience in the heart, and touched afresh by the Holy Spirit, and with a new meaning from new events, became the gospel of the kingdom. That word—"according to the Scriptures"—was the keynote of the preaching, whether with Jew or Gentile, whether in rehearsing the wonders of God in former years, or in unfolding the greater wonders of Christ and him crucified, of his resurrection from the dead, and of the future resurrection of those who are his. It was the conquering word wherever it went, and so the kingdom of Christ

was established among men, and his churches coming into existence in many places bore testimony to his saving grace.

The history of Christ and of his disciples—of his life, death, resurrection, and his work of redemption, of their labors in suffering and in bearing the good news of salvation to the lost world—all this history put into written form by holy men, chosen and guided by the Spirit of God, added the New Testament to the Old. The Bible was made larger, and even richer, since to Moses and the prophets were added the four Gospels as the biography of our Lord, the Acts of the Apostles, showing what God's Holy Spirit had wrought among men, those wonderful letters from men of God to the churches and to the saints scattered abroad everywhere, and finally the Revelation of John, in which on the Isle of Patmos God vouchsafed to him, and through him to us, a vision of the future triumph of the kingdom and the coronation of the King.

This one Book of the church, therefore, our Bible of today, consists of the Old Testament Scriptures, together with the New Testament Scriptures, wrought into one by the Providence of God as his word forever and ever. We do not discriminate between the Old and the New as dividing their authority or significance, but hold them together, as they have come down to us

the one book—the Book of God, the man of our counsel, and the lamp to our feet.

So it comes to pass that we have more in the way of the Bible than Christ had, even more than his apostles had, and are richer in the enlarged and enriched word of God. We have more in the Christian Bible for instruction in the home than the Jews had in their Hebrew Bible; the church has more in its Book than the Temple had in its Scriptures. They had the tree, we are rich in the beauty of its foliage and in the ripeness of its fruit. Our light is greater, and also our privilege and our responsibility.

#### A BOOK OF DIVINE AUTHORSHIP.

This Book of the church, like the church itself, has God for its Author. It is the Book of God for instruction in the church of God. When Paul remained for a year and six months with the church at Corinth, he “taught them the word of God.” He no doubt opened to them the Old Testament Scriptures, as the Master had done with the two disciples in the way to Emmaus when their hearts burned within them under his gracious words of exposition. But Paul no doubt also was adding to the Scriptures of the Old something of the New which he had received of the Lord and which later he committed to writing. But it was “the word of the Lord,” and he was God’s messenger, with God’s message—

the word of God preached in the church of God as it is to this day.

There is no intention here to make technical discussion of any theory of inspiration. It need not concern us as to *how* God inspired men, or how God created the universe. Suffice it, that with the one God spoke the word, and it was done; and that with the other, God breathed upon the mind and heart of men, and they in speech or written word "spake as the Spirit gave them utterance" concerning the wonderful work and ways of God. Each writer wrote for himself, preserving his own individuality, and yet wrote for God as God would have him write. A man's individuality under the power and spell of inspiration was no more interfered with, than when he is the subject of regeneration, which is of the same power, and is even more radical and revolutionary in heart and mind.

Whatever theory we may have of inspiration or of how God gave the Bible to men and through men, it must be at once large enough and exclusive enough to leave the authorship unquestioned. There can be no abridgement of God's authorship of the Bible, working through such channels and by such methods as please him. So long as God is doing things through men, there will be more or less of the human element both in the doing and in the product. But we should not go too far in trying to separate between God

and man in producing the Bible, just as we should not try to point out the human and the divine in Christ; at any rate, it is safer and in better keeping with the mystery and majesty of the question, not to minify but rather magnify the divine element. Holy men of old spake and wrote for God as the Spirit moved them, and *gave them utterance*; and their words were the very word of the Lord, which endureth forever.

This mighty fact is true both for the revelation and inspiration which enter into the making of the Bible, and gives it a name and place above all other books. Revelation is the uncovering and making known things which man could not know of himself, and such as God in his grace has revealed to him—the deep things of God, the mystery of his will, the great and wondrous doctrines of his grace and of his love in redemption. “Eye hath not seen”—human eye hath not seen—“nor ear heard, neither hath entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him. But God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit; for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God.” This is revelation, and without it men would have been in the dark forever—as the world would be, and even worse, if the sun should not rise tomorrow morning.

Inspiration, on the other hand, is God's special work in the writer to guarantee the writing in

making the record which God would have written. It comes by virtue of God's breathing his Holy Spirit upon the human heart and mind, as one tells of the revelation which God has made and how God manifested himself in history. We know not the movements of the Holy Spirit in the new birth or in that sanctification which comes by the Holy Spirit through the truth. Nor do we know of his movement in the special work of inspiring men to write in such way as to leave the writer free in his own individuality, and yet they gave us God's thought in God's words. And because of this work of the Spirit, the writing bears the heavenly imprint, "It is written," has the fragrance of the heavenly fields and the flavor of the heavenly fruit.

Revelation and inspiration both appear in making both the Old and the New Testament. Together they make the Holy Scriptures, which claim to be of God, and vindicate their claim. They hold the unique place of single and supreme authority in doctrine and life. They are that word of the Lord which he compares to rain and snow, coming down from heaven and not returning to him void, but fulfilling their mission and prospering in the thing whereunto he sent it. And for us today the Holy Scriptures are as the burning bush in which God appears and speaks to us as he did to Moses; or the pillar of cloud by day and of fire by night in which God appears as

he did to the children of Israel; or as Jacob's ladder which he saw in vision at Bethel, with angels ascending and descending, and with God revealing himself in the open heavens. Surely the God of the Bible is our God, and the Book is his message which he will have us hear.

#### THE NEW TESTAMENT ADDED.

The New Testament came several hundred years after the Old Testament. Its coming marked a new and mighty period in the world's history when God and men were again co-workers, both in making history and putting it in written form. There is no need for discussion here, as to how the New Testament came, or how it grew through passing years, and finally became coequal with the Old Testament Scriptures in inspiration, dignity and authority.

It may be taken for granted that from the apostolic time onward each church in general had for use in public service at least one gospel containing the life and words of the Master, and some of the apostolic epistles, especially those addressed to themselves and to the churches in the same region. . . .

A highly appreciated apostolic writing possessed by one church in a given region would soon come into the possession of most or all of the churches. . . . Such apostolic writings as could be conveniently procured were possessed by the various churches and were freely used for reading in the church services and as material for the literary and oral discourses of the Christian teachers. . . .



From the close of the apostolic age, or even earlier, most of the books that were afterwards accepted as canonical were in use in greater or smaller collection in the various Christian churches for purposes of edification, and were revered because alike of their apostolic authorship and of the authoritative account which they contained of the life and words of Christ and of the apostles. (Dr. Albert Henry Newman.)

The making of the New Testament as an addition to the Old Testament was an august movement in the literature of the world. The Book is here and speaks for itself; and speaks now, as its writers spoke, in soberness, with heavenly wisdom, and in the demonstration of the Spirit and of power. The churches out of whose history it grew as cause and effect, may have failed in their succession; but the book in unbroken continuity is here with us, having the freshness, and fragrance, and power of the morning of the first day.

First came the Epistle of James, named for its author, who was the brother of our Lord, and subscribed himself, "a servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ." It was written while he was serving the church at Jerusalem as bishop or pastor. Then came the letters to the Thessalonians. They were written by Paul from the church at Corinth, and addressed to the church at Thessalonica, then lately established. The opening salutation is of peculiar interest as being among the first words written for the New Testa-



ment, and the second record in writing of the new forces which had been introduced into the world's movements, and which had made the new dispensation: "Paul, and Silvanus, and Timotheus, unto the church of the Thessalonians, which is in God, the Father, and in the Lord Jesus Christ."

Then came the letters to the church of God at Corinth, written by the same writer, but while he was serving the Ephesian church. The gospel had produced the churches, and now the churches are the occasion at least of putting into written form for all succeeding ages, the gospel of the grace of God, with its wonderful history among men. The book grew in its several parts and the churches became custodians of the new treasure, and passed down the line until it became just as we have it now. It has passed through fiery trials unscorched, has met all the demands of its friends, and for many centuries has been the light and joy of all who will walk in its light or live in its joy.

It is the New Testament especially which must be our guide in the study of the church, and must determine all questions of church life, whether of creed or conduct. For the church is distinctly of the new dispensation; and whatever pertains to the church, as to who shall be members, as to its officers and government, as to its ordinances and service, as to its character, life

and mission must be learned and settled from the New Testament. That is the one touchstone of all church creed and conduct, and cannot be asserted too strongly or followed too closely. What the New Testament rules out, is ruled out, whether in precept or in practice; what it commands is commanded, is the end of controversy, and requires obedience, with the promise of reward.

There is need for this one standard in our church life, and without it there is uncertainty and discord everywhere. In a large jewelry store there may be five hundred watches and clocks, but the workman at the bench, as he sets your timepiece, looks at the regulator as it hangs on the wall and marks the hour of day. So in our belief and practice, even with our convictions and conscience we must look away from ourselves to the one standard of authority. The Scriptures alone can be this one rule of faith, and their authority is final. No human authority will suffice; we must look to the word of God and measure all by that word as the one standard. If the Scriptures, for example, require infant baptism, then we must have infant baptism; if the Scriptures restrict baptism to believers, and place that ordinance before the Lord's Supper as prerequisite, then the restriction must stand. If the Scriptures command sprinkling for baptism, so it must be; if the Scriptures require immersion

as the one form of baptism to the exclusion of sprinkling, then the requirement must stand, and we must do as we are commanded.

The more completely we are mastered by the one standard, and the more devoutly we recognize the one authority in belief and practice, the more nearly will we come to the mind of the Lord and in conformity to his word. There are no substitutes; there can be no division of authority, neither division of obedience and loyalty. There is no room here for a divided heart or a divided life. "The Bible, and the Bible alone, is the religion" of those who will serve God in his church according to his word and his plans.

#### GOD'S AUTHORITY IN THE WRITTEN WORD.

The Scriptures hold this commanding place of authority as the expression of the will of God. The Bible is more than regulator or referee, more than a set of rules or a code of law. It is no fetich to be worshipped in blindness and ignorance; nor a power in itself to have as a charm on the person or in the home. As the living word of the living God it is a guide to be trusted and followed, an authority to be known, honored and obeyed. We serve and worship not the Bible as a book, but the God of the Bible as our light and salvation, as our Father to whom we should give living obedience—giving a free obedience with an obedient liberty.

This is the recognition of God's authority in the Scriptures, and obedience to him is not bondage to a book. We recognize his dominion in heart, and thought and life, but that is not slavery of soul, nor has it any kinship with slavery. It makes rather for the larger freedom. God's call is indeed imperative; but imperative as meeting man's deepest needs and as opening the way to the larger life. The call of a father to his child crying in the dark, is a call for deliverance. Prayer, study, interpretation for oneself, personal obedience—"these are mutually dependent, and form an invisible whole," as the best method of handling the word of God. "If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine whether it be of God."

The Book—this book which holds supreme sway in the church—meets a great and pressing necessity. Man is blind and in the dark for the things which concern him most deeply. Whether for men individually, or for any number of men, as in the aggregate of church membership, there is imperative need for an authority and a light outside themselves. No light from within will suffice; whether mind, or heart, or reason, or consciousness, or all of these combined. These themselves will need to be tested over and over again, and must be regulated by the standard which is higher and supreme in authority. For this high function God in condescending grace

has given his word. It is man's prerogative to search the Scriptures for himself, and in searching may find himself in his relation to God, and find also his salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus.

We cannot exaggerate our dependence upon the Scriptures as the word of God, or their supreme place in the churches and in our church life. Here and here alone can we know the mind of the Lord, his will and ways concerning us. Here and here alone is our only safeguard, our light and joy in serving him in the things which he has commanded. The transforming of God's word into life and action through his Spirit, into human words and deeds, is the noblest life before men, and the most acceptable to God. It makes the vital and necessary connection between belief and practice, between creed and conduct. Without God's word the foundations are all gone; but with it the building of God standeth sure, and we are safe in him.

The book alone, moreover, reveals both the God of our salvation and the salvation of our God; nowhere else can these mighty things be learned, whether in the wonders of nature or the greater wonders of Providence; grace is not made known in the stars, nor his infinite love in the planets. And the great doctrines of the Bible, as to man's origin and nature, his ruin by sin and his redemption by the cross, his salva-

tion now, and his destiny hereafter—these things of tremendous moment can be learned nowhere else except in the Book of the church. From its wonderful pages come the light which shines on the darkness, gives cheer and comfort, opens the way of the heavenly walk, and by foretaste and forecast makes known the joys and glories which shall follow.

Without the Bible, too, we know nothing of Christ—the historic Christ; nothing of his life, nothing of his wondrous nature, suffering, death and resurrection, nothing of his wonderful love and gracious words, nothing of his churches as to their origin or character, nothing as to his ordinances as to what they are or what they require or what they mean in their great message to men; nothing as to our life in the church of Christ as to its blessing and lofty walk, nothing as to his own saving grace and kingly power. All this comes alone from the Bible, either directly or indirectly; and by its pages alone can we get back to the Christ of history who came to save, and who saves us through the blood of the everlasting covenant. Loyalty to the Book is loyalty to him. It reigns without a rival in its own great domain of truth; is forever supreme in the church, and for the individual has undivided command in precept and practice. It is the Book of God, the one Book of the church—God's message to men, and man's mission for God.

## CHAPTER V.

### THE CHURCH AND ITS ORDINANCES.

**T**HE church is a local organization, and means the same whether called the church of God or the church of Christ. This is true also when the word is used in its plural form, as churches of God or churches of Christ. They are regularly organized bodies, with members and officers, with organic life and government each one within itself. The church is very simple as an organization, a distinctively Christian institution, a pure democracy and sovereign within itself so far as human connection is concerned. It has no other head or law-giver except the Lord Jesus Christ, and the members are those whom he has saved by his own precious blood and brought into this high and holy relationship on their voluntary choice.

The church as an organized body, moreover, has its pastors and deacons as officers, whom it chooses to fulfill their respective duties for its own edification and for the furtherance of the interests which God has intrusted to its care. These men are of the Lord, and fill their places of surpassing rank and dignity, not as serving themselves, but as serving others. The officers



are themselves of divine appointment, being set in the church for noble and blessed ministry, and should be filled by men called of God and chosen in answer to his call. The first pastor was James, the brother of our Lord. He served the church at Jerusalem, making for himself a great record as pastor, and was called "the Just"—a noble man serving in a noble office. The pastor of today in a certain sense is in the royal line of that first pastor. The pastorate is of the Lord, and the pastor is the Lord's anointed.

As an organization the church also has its ordinances, public services, ministries and distinct mission in the world. These mark its distinctive character, and it holds a place by itself among the organizations of the world. Its ordinances, being the ordinances of the gospel of Christ and of his appointment, hold commanding place in the church, while the church itself is greatly magnified by the wonderful meaning of its ordinances. An art gallery far famed for architectural beauty may become much more famous because pictures of renown adorn its walls. The ordinances are indeed pictures in the church as the building of God; but much more than pictures, they are of its very organization and life, essential to its local character in service and administration. They hold their place in the church as a very part of God's plan of service, and bear wonderful testimony to his love and grace.



## AS SEEN IN THE NEW TESTAMENT.

According to the New Testament there are two ordinances in the church, namely: Baptism and the Lord's Supper. Some claim more than two, but all insist upon these two as to their place and importance in the organic life and service of the church, and in the individual life of church members. This agreement is significant in giving emphasis to these two ordinances, and is recognition of their high claim to our attention and allegiance. It marks both Baptism and the Lord's Supper, in a powerful way, as ordinances in the church of God for present day observance.

The two stand together in closest relation and kinship of meaning. Baptism has water as its element, immersion as its form, and believers as its subject; the Lord's Supper has bread and wine as its elements, eating and drinking as its form, and church members as the subjects of its holy service. Both of them are symbols, commemorative, memorial, monumental in their nature, purpose and teaching power. This simple but comprehensive statement covers all the questions concerning these ordinances, that have caused so much division among the followers of our Lord.

For a more elaborate discussion than is consistent with the present purpose, the reader is referred to the author's three books: "Pedobap-

tism: Is it from Heaven or of Men? The Moral Dignity of Baptism; The Memorial Supper of Our Lord. In our study we must keep in mind the relation of these ordinances to each other, their place in the church and among the followers of Christ, and their wonderful meaning even in the economy of God's grace. They are of mighty consequence to Christ and his cause, as commandments committed to his church for obedience, as ceremonies in his service, and as marvelous manifestation of the wonders of the cross in its power to save. They should be magnified as the ordinances of God in the church of God, as the ordinances of Christ in the church of Christ—mighty and wonderful in authorship and ownership, and in their power to symbolize truth.

These ordinances in our study may be viewed from two standpoints. We may consider their use and place in the New Testament, or their place and practice in the present condition of modern church life. It is well to hold the two viewpoints in comparison, if only we strive to harmonize the present practice with the New Testament, and make the New Testament the one standard of faith and practice in the churches of today. What the ordinances were to Christ and what they were in the life and teaching of his apostles, are of immediate and pressing concern to us. This is our one standard, and should be the one ambition of our hearts as we seek

to serve God in his appointed way and to glorify him in his church and in keeping his commandments.

Viewed from the New Testament standpoint, Baptism is for believers, who being born of God's Spirit have accepted Christ as their personal Saviour and Lord; it is there immersion in water upon personal profession of their faith, and shows in a figure the burial and resurrection of Jesus, and symbolizes their own spiritual resurrection and personal relation to him. The Lord's Supper is also for believers, but for believers who have been baptized, who have been buried with Christ in baptism and are risen again to a newness of life and are gathered into the church as members. This is the order and privilege of the ordinances; there is no saving efficacy in either of them. They cannot save, but rather are in their very nature only for saved people. Salvation is essential to baptism; baptism is essential to membership in the church; church membership in the fullness of its meaning is essential to right and scriptural observance of the Lord's Supper.

#### DISCRIMINATING BETWEEN VIEWS.

This is the view of Baptists as they interpret the New Testament and insist upon its teachings as the sole guide in these matters. Over against this view, however, others have substituted "sprinkling as a mode of baptism" in place of im-

mersion, and have introduced and maintained the practice of "baptizing infants." And these two things make sharp division between the followers of Christ, and are a manifest departure from the practice of Christ and his apostles. They bring us squarely to the parting of the ways. Shall we follow the change and substitute, or shall we follow the New Testament, as the one rule of our faith and practice? The best exegesis and scholarship of the world, regardless of denomination, testify with remarkable agreement, that the *original form* of baptism as set out in the New Testament was immersion. And the very meaning of the word *baptize*, and the meaning also of the ordinance itself, and the circumstances connected with its early administration, *all require immersion as the form*, and no other form can possibly meet the requirements. *Sprinkling* as "a mode" and substitute for baptism, has no support or sanction in the word of God; it has no place in the meaning of the word *baptize*, which always designates the ordinance and always means immerse; *sprinkling* has no resemblance to the baptism of Jesus in the Jordan which was an immersion and had the approval of the Father; and no resemblance either to the other baptisms reported in the New Testament like Philip's baptizing the Ethiopian treasurer; and *sprinkling* has no resemblance to the chief symbolism in baptism, which is manifestly burial and resurrection, and is utterly

without meaning when put in the place of this great ordinance.

The Greek Lexicons, whose authors are scholars of exceptional rank but not Baptists, are uniform in their definition of the *word baptize* and of *the ordinance baptism*. As given by Thayer :

“In the New Testament an immersion in water. Baptism is immersion, submersion. Christian baptism, according to the view of the apostles, is a rite of sacred immersion, commanded by Christ.”

And as given by Herman Cremer :

“To immerse, submerge. The peculiar New Testament use of the word denotes immersion, submersion for a religious purpose.”

The expositors likewise give the same definition and exposition of both this word and its meaning in the ordinance. For example, in the International Commentary, Dr. Gould, *Episcopalian*, comments on Mark :

“Baptism of repentance—into the Jordan. Rite of immersion in water. The preposition here coincides with the proper meaning of the verb, indicating that the *form of the rite* was immersion into the stream.”

And Dr. Alfred Plummer, *Presbyterian*, comments on Luke in the same way :

“Baptize, I immerse. It is only when baptism is administered by immersion that its full significance is seen.”

And there can be no finer statement of the case than the statement made by Dr. William Sandy,

an Episcopal scholar; when commenting on Romans 6: 4, where the believer is said to be buried with Christ in Baptism, he said concerning the ordinance:

“It expresses symbolically a series of acts corresponding to the redeeming acts of Christ:

“Immersion=Death;

“Submersion=Burial (ratification of death);

“Emergence=Resurrection.”

This statement is of rare force and beauty, and tells the whole story of the wonderful meaning and purpose of the great ordinance as shown in the simple but significant form of immersion. These men are not Baptists—not one of them—nor were they speaking for Baptists, but their testimony is the testimony of scholarship and of candid scriptural exegesis. This should put an end to the controversy so far as concerns what the New Testament requires as to the form of baptism. Since it requires immersion, surely there should be no hesitation on our part of following its word.

The Baptist view, moreover, of the believer's baptism as against “the baptism of infants,” has, if possible, even stronger support from able and prominent men in other denominations. Of course all Baptist learning and scholarship are one way on this question, and these others are cited simply as corroborative, and as being all the more forceful because they are not of our faith and

practice. For example, and one example, especially like the one quoted below is sufficient, although they could be multiplied by hundreds, Dr. A. T. Bledsoe, a Methodist, writing for the Methodist *Quarterly Review*, made the following very remarkable statement:

“With all our searching, we have been unable to find in the New Testament a single expressed declaration or word in favor of infant baptism. We justify the rite, therefore, wholly on the ground of logical inference, and not on any expressed word of Christ and his apostles. This may, perhaps, be deemed by some of our readers a strange position for a Pedobaptist. It is by no means, however, a singular position, hundreds of learned Pedobaptists have come to the same conclusion, especially since the New Testament has been subjected to a clearer, more conscientious, and more candid exegesis than was formerly practiced by controversialists.”

If infant baptism is not in the New Testament by the word of Christ, that settles the matter for Baptists. Surely it cannot be put there by inference, not even by “logical inference.” Dr. Bledsoe was right; infant baptism cannot be found in the New Testament, nor was it in the church of that period, and should have no place in the church of today. He wrote several years ago, but more and more what he said is coming to be recognized as true, and the practice itself is fast falling into disuse for the want of scriptural authority. It not only has no support or mention by Christ and



his apostles, but contravenes his command to baptize believers, interferes with personal obligation, takes away personal privilege, and otherwise sets aside fundamental principles of the gospel.

How these changes came, and the sad record they have made for the ordinances of the Lord's house, are matters of history and can be easily determined. How they are maintained today, and their disastrous effects on the cause of Christ and on his truth in general, are plainly manifest. Those who practice "sprinkling as a mode of baptism" see no significance in the ordinance and count it a "mere rite" and of little consequence. Its great meaning is gone, so far as they are concerned, and it has lost its mighty symbolic force. Baptism can never speak its mightiest word except in the original form of immersion, or have its true and lofty meaning except with believers as its subjects. That word and that meaning are for a threefold resurrection, namely: the resurrection of Jesus, the spiritual resurrection wrought in the believer's heart by the power of God, and the final resurrection of the dead. All this disappears when "sprinkling" takes the place of baptism and infants are substituted for believers. The Roman Catholics are bold in saying they made the change from immersion first to "pouring as a mode" of baptism, and then to sprinkling, and boast that "The Church" had the right to make the change. But we dare not follow them,



or join with others in tampering with the ordinances of the Lord. Our course of duty is plain; it is far better to be "righteous before God, walking in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless."

#### CEREMONIES AS WELL AS ORDINANCES.

This view is further strengthened and its significance increased when we remember that these ordinances are also *ceremonies* in God's plan of service, and are powerful in the church life of believers. They are ceremonies of the new dispensation and of the New Testament system. This increases their significance and gives additional weight to their meaning. An ordinance expresses authority and requires obedience, as something ordered, set in order, commanded; a ceremony has all that, and besides has in it the purpose of an outward expression for a spiritual condition. It is doing outwardly that which we believe and have experienced in the heart. The marriage ceremony expresses the vows of the heart, as to love, choice and purpose. The inaugural ceremony when the nation's chief executive takes the oath of office is the outward expression of purpose and promise to serve in all faithfulness.

Baptism and the Lord's Supper as *ceremonies*, are the expression of personal belief, of solemn vows before God, of the deepest, richest and happiest experience of the human heart. When

designing and building his church, Christ chose these two rites and gave them their place of rank and of surpassing significance. They are set into the building by his own words, and the church life is incomplete without them. They are of his wisdom and love, of his purpose and authority, as an essential part of the gospel system. They bear the heavenly imprint of those words of his own great heart, and require heavenly precision in their observance: "If ye love me, keep my commandments; do this in remembrance of me."

They are in the church, therefore, as the embodiment of its doctrine and life, as a bold and beautiful expression of its creed and hopes. In a real though symbolic way, Baptism and the Lord's Supper, as caskets with jewels of untold worth, stand for mighty things in the kingdom of grace, and are set in the church for glorious purpose. In the beauty and charm of the symbol they tell the wonderful story of death, burial, and resurrection, of grace wrought in the heart and the coming of new life, of struggle and conflict, of conquest, coronation, and of glory to follow.

Whether as ordinances or ceremonies, therefore, they appeal with mighty force to those who love the Lord and serve him with gladness. They are as important now as at the first; they mean as much in the church today as they meant in the church at Jerusalem or the church of God at Corinth. They have the same meaning and bear

the same message now as then, and signify as much in our church life as they signified in the life of those early disciples. Truly they are ceremonies now as then, but let no one say "mere ceremonies," or count them of little consequence. They are in the church as ordinances of our Lord, and came to us as ceremonies from heaven. The doing of them is like the doing of the thing which the angels do—obedience with heavenly precision, the doing of God's will among men.

These ordinances enter in the very structure of the church as the building of God, and are a part of its organic life. No one surely would enter a great cathedral and mar the beauty of its finish or spoil the pictures on its walls. But what of God's building, and what of these mighty pictures which he holds up before the world? To spoil baptism by perversion in any way, is like spoiling the new tomb in the garden; the disfiguring of the Lord's Supper by misrepresentation, is almost like disfiguring the cross on which the Prince of Glory died, or in some way marring or even mocking that awful tragedy which has been the wonder of the world for two thousand years. And yet these great ordinances are sometimes so changed and disfigured until there is no resemblance to burial or the empty tomb, no resemblance either to the cross or to the atonement which came in the shedding of blood as the purchase price of redemption.

## KEEPING THEM AS THEY WERE DELIVERED.

The church and its ordinances are of immense moment and far-reaching consequence for the cause of Christ today. They should hold a commanding place in the heart and in the church life. They involve both the authority of our Lord, and our obedience to what he has commanded. The keeping of these ordinances inviolate may be essential to the very heart of the Christian system as essential to its integrity. The *form itself* taken with the believer as its subject, holds the meaning of the ordinance, carries the very heart and life of its teaching power. For the one there must be eating and drinking; for the other there must be an immersion in water. Both in ordinance and ceremony, form is essential to its integrity and significance. The ordinance remains or goes according to whether the form remains or goes. Marred in its form and subject the great ordinance is marred out of all recognition. Take these away—with no immersion as the form, or with other than believers in Christ as the subject—and the ordinance itself disappears. There can be no baptism without the form of baptism, as there can be no wedding ring without the round form of the ring; there can be no baptism without the believer as the subject, as there can be no wedding without the bride for the voluntary commitment of personal vows and the confession of personal love and loyalty.

Violation in these matters is of mighty concern, and is serious beyond adequate statement. The plea for faithfulness in character and fidelity in obedience cannot be too urgent, for it involves the very honor of Christ and his kingship over us. Will we follow him? Will we do as he commanded? Do we count these things of importance? These are the questions which find their way to the heart and conscience. A present day danger lies just here and confronts everyone who loves Christ and worships him as Lord. There is, as we have seen, the admission that Christ was immersed, that immersion was the form of New Testament baptism, that believers were the subjects of that baptism, with no mention of infants—all these things are admitted, and then waived aside as "*making no difference*" to us in our church life, or in our belief and practice.

An Episcopal woman said to me: "Of course Jesus was immersed, everyone believes that he was immersed. But that is no reason why I should be immersed." Oh, reader, do not venture that far! It is of consequence, of tremendous consequence, for *you to follow him* in his example, and to keep his commandments. Since he was immersed, count it all joy that you can go where he went. Give his ordinances a great place in your thought and life; honor him by honoring his church and his ceremonies.

Our bearing toward these ceremonies and ordinances of our Lord may be the test of our heart in its feeling toward him. We seek his favor, he seeks our allegiance; we call upon him in the day of trouble, he calls upon us for a life in his service. He puts before us these great ordinances and leaves them to make their appeal, and their voice is the voice of our Saviour calling that way. It is wrong, surely it must be wrong, even seriously wrong, to profess our love and obedience in everything else—and then refuse to follow him in the great ordinance in which he set the example. \* That beautiful song which we sing will take on a new meaning by a slight change in a single word, and gets a touch of the heroic, especially as referred to the ordinary duties in our church life.

I can hear my Savior *calling*,  
*I can hear* my Savior calling,  
 I can hear *my* Savior calling,  
 Take thy cross and follow, *follow me*.

I'll go with him thro' the garden,  
 I'll go with him *thro' the Jordan*,  
 I'll go *with* him thro' the Jordan,  
 I'll go *with him*, with him, *all the way*.

Where *he leads me* I will follow,  
 Where he leads me *I will follow*,  
 Where he leads me I will follow,  
 I'll go *with him*, with him, *all the way*.

Why not the *Jordan* as well as the garden? He met the one in fulfillment of righteousness, as he endured the other with sorrowfulness of soul. He was as heroic and lofty before God in the one as in the other. Why not follow him in life's ordinary duties as well as in life's trials and sorrows? Why not follow him in baptism—buried with him unto death and rising again to a new life with him? There is nothing higher or more heroic, than the keeping of his commandments and the walking in his ordinances. To obey is better than sacrifice, especially when the obedience is of love and loyalty. Herein is the very heart and beauty and power of all church life. It is our joy and his glory to go *with him*, with him *all the way*.

## CHAPTER VI.

### HOW THE DENOMINATIONS CAME.

**T**HIS is not a chapter on "Church History." That goes too far afield and is little service for present purposes. And yet the question of how the denominations came—Baptists, Lutherans, Episcopalians, Presbyterians, Methodists, Disciples, and others—is a question of history. And the history is instructive as throwing light on the church life of today. Things are not what they were, nor as they were in the New Testament period. They are better in some respects. Christ and his cause has stronger and more widespread hold on the hearts of men than then, than in any former period of the world's history. The sun never sets on his dominion. And around the world, as a girdle of melody and music like the music of the spheres, his people sing the song of Moses and the Lamb, and in their hearts crown him King of kings and Lord of lords.

There are as fine types of Christian character and life, and they are far more numerous than ever before, and they are found in all these denominations. This is noted simply as a fact, manifest and evidenced by many things, and should be counted of value and the subject of



satisfaction and joy. It is remarkable how much of the old remains of the original and genuine gospel in its truth, spirit, form and lofty purpose. And yet over against all this in sad and blighting contrast stand the departures from the simplicity and spirituality of the early church life, and the consequent conflict between those who have one Lord and whose hopes and purposes are largely one. And out of these departures, more or less grave and with a conflict more or less sharp at times, have come these denominations. And so they remain today—in some respects simply the relic of history and the fruitage of former conflicts.

The word church is not synonymous with denomination, and when used in any scriptural sense cannot be applied to these denominations. They cannot be called churches, as for example, the Methodist Church. It is a wrong use of the word and leads away from its distinctive meaning. And these denominations are not the several "different branches of the Church of Christ," as if parts of an aggregate whole. That is absurd in itself, for no stock or trunk could send out from itself "*branches*" so diverse and so radically different both from each other and from the trunk itself. Episcopalians and Baptists, as everybody must know, are not *branches from one trunk*, and Presbyterians and Methodists surely do not come of the same stock. Like produces like in the

spiritual domain as in the natural, and common sense calls for the movement of things in their order, and "the branch theory" finds no support in the word of God.

#### NEITHER BRANCHES NOR THE CHURCH.

And, further, the church, certainly whenever considered as an organized body, means an assembly, local in character and organic life, complete and independent, but as a whole not divisible into parts or as a tree sending out branches. The church is governed within itself, and never means in the scriptures an aggregate of churches, though it may have associative and coöperative relation with similar bodies, each of which is a church of the same organic character and on the same basis as coördinate and equal.

The cause of Christ would gain immensely and we would save confusion if this distinctive word of the New Testament could be held to the New Testament use; and then, too, the local church itself, which is largely shorn of its power, would appear in the standing and life more nearly commensurate with the dignity of its character and mission. The term "Baptist Church" as designating Baptist churches in the aggregate, is a misuse of the word, and contrary to the very genius and principles of our people. Baptist churches, or Baptist people, but never "The Baptist Church," should be the language of our Zion.

The use of the phrase "The Church," to represent Christ's cause at large in an organic way, is of Rome pure and simple, came of centralized imperial power, and is the relic of barbarous times when Rome was at its worst.

*Christian* History is therefore more correct than "*Church* History," as a term to indicate the course of Christianity in the world, which oftentimes was dark and tragic, encountering opposition, persecution and suffering—though itself the messenger of peace and blessing. Indeed there is no such thing as "Church History," in the sense commonly understood. Even the New Testament, covering the mightiest period of the world's history, is yet not the history of "The Church," or of any one church, or of the churches of that period. It recounts the beginning and the triumphant movement of the cause of Christ—of his kingdom among men, if one wishes to so designate it—expressing itself and having organic form and life, first in the one church at Jerusalem, then more than one, then in the many as they were multiplied throughout the world, but never *the one* as the aggregate of them all.

And so it should be when we come to study or write the story of his cause for the years and centuries which came after the New Testament period. We want *Christian* History, and not "Church History"—unless, forsooth, one wishes to write the history of the Roman Catholic hier-

archy which in monstrous form and power posed, and still poses, as "The Church" universal. But we want, rather, and in striking contrast, the progress of the gospel, the movement of the kingdom of God among men, of that kingdom of which Christ is King, which is in the world but not of the world—which has no kinship with either the Rome of the imperial Cæsars, or the Rome which made the Antichrist of history.

But after all we will hardly be able to rid ourselves of the word, "The Church," or "Church History," or "The History of the Church," and other kindred terms; we may be compelled to use them as they have become fixed in our language and literature; nevertheless they are a misnomer for the kingdom of Christ, and carry in themselves errors of doctrine and principles, which at times made all Christendom groan and shriek in the suffering and agony of persecution. And in tracing these denominations to their historic origin we must ever keep in mind, that we are seeking the history not of "The Church," but of Christ's kingdom in the world; and that his kingdom from the first as we have seen until now, has its organic expression among men through churches which come and go. It begun so with the New Testament period, worked its way through the ages, with many ups and downs, oftentimes with powerful corruptions both from within and without as it came in contact and

conflict with the world, but all the while was struggling toward a final and triumphant outcome.

These denominations for the most part, came from efforts at reform, and their several names indicate something both of their history and their doctrine. Their origin is of interest, and instructive also when held in comparison and contrast. Lutherans came of the great Reformation in the early part of the sixteenth century (1530), and from the first until now have borne the name of their great founder, Martin Luther. Being himself a Roman Catholic, but breaking away from them under the power of the mighty doctrine of justification by faith, newly and powerfully experienced by him, Luther set up in Germany over against the powers and corruptions at Rome what we have now as the Lutheran Church. Episcopalians get their name from their form of church government as a modified form of Catholicism, which is episcopal, or by an episcopate. They also came from the reform movement in England with a singular coalition of civil and religious forces, with Henry VIII, a cruel and brutal monarch, becoming the head of the church in London instead of the Pope at Rome. In this way the Church of England came (1534) giving what we now have in the United States as the Protestant Episcopal Church—having come from Rome and not unlike Rome.

The Presbyterians also have their name from their church government, which in form is presbyterial, with its churchly order and grades of officers. They came from the Calvinistic Reformation, headed by John Calvin of Geneva, and one of the mightiest men of his time, who with John Knox of Scotland, and others, succeeded in forming at Geneva (1536) what we have now as the Presbyterian Church. They came through Scotland as the State Church, and came near being the State Church of England, and have been always and everywhere a powerful factor in the religious thought and life of the people. Their name has come to not only indicate a form of church government, but to represent a powerful system of doctrine as set out in the Westminster Confession of Faith. They have always been, from the days of John Calvin until now, a doctrinal people, and this has been the chief source of their power and production of noble Christian character.

The Methodists as a people are numerous and powerful. Their name came in a peculiar fashion but carries within itself nothing of doctrine or church life. As a distinct people they came of a reform movement within the Church of England, the movement being brought on, guided and crystalized by the two Wesleys, John and Charles. They were exceptional men in many ways, and even while at school began to make their rank

of distinction. While at Oxford Charles Wesley, because of his methodical observance of University regulations, was called "Methodist" by his fellow students—none of them realizing what mighty things were forming, or that coming events were casting their shadows before. But the reformation under the two Wesley brothers, who were still members and operating within the Church of England, gained in power and sweep of influence. Organization became necessary in order to make sure what had been accomplished, and John Wesley, by force of his more constructive mind, became the master spirit and organized Methodism (1744), the name coming from the student life of his brother Charles. The making of a new church was not the intention, but came with a new exigency and in the constructing of an organization to hold the work intact and power. Thus came the Methodist Church, coming out of the Episcopal Church, though nearly two hundred years later, and with a modified form of its doctrine, government, organization and service, just as the Church of England had retained a modified form of the Catholics at Rome. And *Methodist* is surely a good name if only it stands for strict observance of New Testament practice and requirement, as Charles Wesley made it apply to the rules and regulations of University life.

The Disciples came from an effort to reform Christendom "in the doing away with all sects,"



and were called Reformers, more at the first than now. Their leader and founder, Alexander Campbell, a man of extraordinary parts in some ways, led in the new reformation, and was joined by his father, Thomas Campbell. They left the Presbyterian Church, of which they were members (1811), and organized an independent church. He and his new organization united (1813) with a Baptist District Association in Virginia, thinking to find with them what was wanted. But he was excluded from their fellowship (1827) as holding views radically different from what the Baptists themselves held, and as hurtful to the cause of Christ, and the breeder of discord. With his followers and such as could be drawn from other denominations, he founded what we have now as The Disciples Church—more popularly known as Campbellites, after their great leader and to distinguish them from others.

#### HOW ABOUT THE BAPTIST PEOPLE.

The Baptists resemble the Presbyterians more than any other. Much like them in doctrinal life, they differ radically in the form of church government, and in their interpretation of the ordinances of our Lord. Our people are congregational in their church government, and are called Baptists for the same reason precisely that the forerunner of our Lord and the man sent of God



was called John the Baptist. They *baptize* and insist on *baptizing* as required in the New Testament. This is not their only mark, but they do contend for this with energy, even clamorously and unto death when necessary; their plea is for faithfulness and obedience, insisting on the ordinance of baptism as fundamental in church order and practice, and on the doctrines of the ordinance as fundamental in the Christian system.

Baptists seek their origin not so much in their name as in a succession of names made significant by historical movements, and in principles which they hold now, and which find their counterpart in the New Testament. Their historic line and connection are easily traceable beyond the Wesleys, beyond the Episcopal genesis with bloody Henry at its head, beyond Knox and Calvin and Luther, reaching into and beyond the Anabaptists, especially those of Switzerland, who at the opening of the sixteenth century were ready to welcome the great Reformation when it came.

“The origin of the Anabaptists of Switzerland,” says Dr. Henry C. Vedder, in his short history, “is obscure. The testimony of their contemporaries is that they derive their chief doctrine from sects that antedated the Reformation, and the testimony is confirmed by so many collateral proofs as to commend itself to many modern historians. . . . The teachings of the Swiss Anabaptists are accurately known to us from three independent and mutually confirmatory

evidences: The testimony of their opponents, the fragments of their writings that remain, and their Confession of Faith. The latter is the first document of its kind known to be in existence. It was issued in 1527. . . .

The confession is not a complete system of doctrines, . . . corresponds exactly with the belief avowed by Baptist churches today. It is significant that what is opprobriously called "close" communion is found to be the teaching of the oldest Baptist document in existence. . . . The only fault charged against them by their contemporaries that is supported by evidence, is that they had the courage and honesty to interpret the scriptures as Baptists today interpret them.

The name Ana-Baptist (rebaptizers) given by their enemies but not accepted by themselves, was their protest—and the protest of history until now—against innovations on the ordinances of the Lord's house. They rejected infant baptism and sprinkling as substitutes for the great ordinance, and demanded that those baptized in infancy or by sprinkling as a mode, *must be baptized* upon a confession of personal faith—they called it baptism, their enemies called it *rebaptize*. Their voice was like the voice of one crying in the wilderness, as with their great forerunner, "prepare ye the way of the Lord and make his paths straight." Their origin was "obscure," or as other historians tell us "hidden in the depths of antiquity," because their life, even their preaching, their worship, and service, was largely a life of hiding out from their enemies. They were

persecuted beyond measure, and sought refuge in the mountains and in the caves and dens of the wilderness.

The history of these people has never been written, probably will never be written, as no records were kept except the records on high. "The dark ages" were lighted up through succeeding centuries by the fires in which these people were burned to death in persecution for the sake of the truth. But with the first dawn, and even as hastening the dawn of the great Reformation, these people came from their hiding, came in great numbers, as a people made ready, came forth as the population in a great city emerges from the home with the passing of the night and the coming of the day. But "there were Protestants before protestantism, Reformers before the Reformation," as Dr. Vedder says, and there were Baptists before *Anabaptists*. Had there been no *Baptists* in principle there could have been no protest against the innovation of sprinkling and infant baptism, no demands for rebaptism, no *Ana-Baptists*.

The history of our people on the part of their enemies is a story of oppression and persecution, but on their own part a story of suffering and heroism, of achievement and triumphant song.

These many reformations which arose through the centuries, were simply efforts of the kingdom of Christ, in its onward movement and through its

own inherent forces, to disentangle itself from the powers of Rome, from false alliances and corruptions which outside influences had brought it. In some things they were successful, but failed in others. They were, for the most part, for the betterment of the conditions, and moved toward the purity, simplicity and spirituality as found in the original gospel. This was true in a marked degree of the great reformation. Luther broke away from his mooring; so did Calvin and Knox; so did the Wesleys, and all of them headed toward the better, indeed toward the best, and yet fell short. And their work, though a power for good in many ways, was shorn of its strength for the want of a complete shedding of the things of Rome. The remaining of these things was their weakness and the marring of all else. These things for the most part are with us today in one form or another, the heritage of a corrupt past and hindrance to a better future. It was the failure of Protestantism and of the Reformation, that the protest was incomplete and the reform unfinished.

The Baptists, though not Protestants in the technical sense, have yet sought earnestly and persistently until this good hour, to carry further and to completion the work which Protestants began so well. Our people stand for believer's baptism, but protest against "the baptism of infants" as a relic of Romanism, as contrary to the

New Testament practice and subversive of New Testament principles; they stand for immersion as the scriptural form of baptism, but protest against the change made by Roman Catholics to "sprinkling as a mode," as being at variance with the example and command of Christ, and destructive of the meaning and beautiful symbolic import of the great ordinance. Baptists hold that the church is an organized body, simple, local and spiritual in character, with its deacons, pastor and self-government, but protest against the radical and ruinous innovation which changes the very nature of the New Testament church, and makes an hierarchal form with its ecclesiastical courts and various grades of officials.

Baptists, moreover, protest against the change from a membership of professing believers in Christ as their Savior and Lord, to a mixed membership of believers and infant children and those not professing godliness, as being destructive of the spiritual life and power of the church and of its lofty mission in the world. They stand for purity in doctrine, but protest against doctrinal changes which have marred the beauty and well-nigh broken the power of the gospel system as given in the New Testament. Their motto is to stand clear aloof from Rome—they at one end of the extreme and Rome at the other in modern church life; and their purpose is to make the New Testament a most modern book in church doc-

trine and practice, at least as a lofty ideal worthy of aim and effort—as their inspiration as it was the inspiration of their forerunners.

STANDING AS THEY HAVE ALWAYS STOOD.

So these denominations, after centuries have passed, are here as types of Christianity and factors in the sum total of modern church life. They are proper subjects for study in comparison with each other, and especially in comparison with the New Testament as the common and final standard. Such a course of study, if pursued in the fraternal spirit, will give better understanding, clearer views and convictions, larger and more generous fellowship. Anyone wishing to go further than is convenient here, will find an excellent aid in a book called *Baptist Why and Why Not*; it contains twenty-five chapters by twenty-five men, as follows: The Distinctive Baptist Why; Why the Bible and Not Other Standards; Why Baptist and Not Roman Catholic; Why Baptist and Not Episcopalian; Why Baptist and Not Presbyterian—and so on through the list as a comparative study of denominational creeds and church life.

These denominations came, moreover, as they severally interpret the scriptures—came, mark you, not from the scriptures, but from their interpretation of the scriptures. For there is no discordant note in God's word, either in belief or

practice. Baptist churches, for example, are the Baptist interpretation of the New Testament; the Presbyterian interpretation continues the Presbyterian churches and The Presbyterian Church. The Scriptures are one, but divergence and discord come of the interpretation—or possibly in their failure to make the scriptures the one rule of faith and obedience. It is of immense moment that we support the New Testament view, and hold it as the one supreme standard and test in our church life. Better a thousand times to disagree, separate and stand aloof, if being together or the forming of union means disobedience to our King or disloyalty to our Lord.

At a crucial period during the Civil War, Mr. Lincoln was urged to pass a certain measure with the plea that the Lord would be with him and on his side. But with characteristic wisdom and discrimination the President replied: 'I am concerned about the Lord's being on my side, but much more concerned about my being on his side and with him in this terrible conflict.' He expressed a real difference which we should apply with all earnestness of purpose when we compare ourselves with the word of God as our rule of faith and practice. Speaking for myself, I should like to know that New Testament churches were Baptist churches, but it is a profounder concern and far more pressing question, whether the



Baptist churches of today are New Testament churches in character and spirit and form, correspondent to what Christ and his apostles taught. This is more vital far than even the question of origin and history, and should be pressed for answer upon all denominations, and upon all who would have us go their way. The Scriptures are the one regnant book in spirit, doctrine, law, and first of all should rule supreme in the individual heart, and control us in our church relation and life. Loyalty to the King requires loyalty to his word.

The words of Dr. Vedder, dedicating his history to the young Baptists of America, are worthy of commendation and emphasis: "In the hope that as they read in it what a New Testament church was, what the churches of their fathers in the faith have been, what trials and sufferings have been borne in the past, what a glorious heritage is theirs in the present, they may be more intelligent, more loyal, more devoted followers of their Lord, and more and more abound unto all good works."

God has ruled, and is overruling for the kingdom of Christ, bringing harmony out of discord, good out of evil, light out of darkness. He achieves his purposes among men as he finds the open heart to listen and the courageous spirit to execute. The cause of Christ has wrought many victories in the past; has often purified itself like



the running stream from the mountain, is all the while working toward final triumph. He has set his kingdom in the world and given it expression in the church, and the gates of hell have not prevailed against it—and shall not. As at the first so also even now, after nearly two thousand years, his kingdom finds its expression, finds its organic life and instrumental power, through his church which he has established among men and has multiplied through the centuries, and through which he will eventually bring his kingdom to completion and hasten the day of his coronation. Churches and individuals alike find their highest renown and greatest usefulness in conformity to his spirit, his law and his pattern. He himself is the glory of his churches; and his churches shining in unclouded and undimmed reflection are the glory of their King.

## CHAPTER VII.

### THE CONFESSION OF FAITH.

**I**T is quite the fashion now to knock the orthodox with adverse criticism. But the word—orthodox—is one of the noblest words in our language, and comes directly from the richest language spoken by man. It describes one of the noblest acts of the human soul, and means *right thinking* as a process or *right thought* as a result. Why take part in murdering or in the effort to besmirch a great word? You can hardly make the word suffer, without the thing for which the word stands also suffering. This matter has wide application, and should elicit our concern, for there is kinship throughout the whole realm of truth.

Right thinking about flowers makes the orthodox botanist and gives fellowship with kindred minds; right thinking about the stars in their courses makes the orthodox astronomer, and creates companionship along the highway of the skies. Newton and Kepler were orthodox in their great kingdom of thought, when thinking God's thought after him in the course of the universe, they discovered, the one the law of gravitation, the other the three imperial laws which

govern the movement of the heavenly bodies. Right thinking in nature makes the orthodox scientist; right thinking about God gives right views of his being and nature, goodness and love, holiness and power—makes one orthodox in the science of theology. Right thinking in the scriptures gives right exegesis, right interpretation, makes one orthodox in the word of God and possesses him with an orthodox confession of faith.

The nobler the subject of thought, the nobler also the act of thinking. Hence the apostle's great exhortation for the orthodox: Hold fast the form of sound words, as essential to right thinking and expression of doctrine. And that other lofty word: Whatsoever things are true and honest, whatsoever things are just and pure, whatsoever things are lovely and of good report, if there be any virtue, and any praise, *think* on these things—*be orthodox in them*. This is not straining the word in its significance and use, but only an effort to let it out into its own wide free realm, and a plea that it be not stricken in the house of its friends.

It is loosely said that the gospel is a life and not a doctrine or system of doctrines, a service and not a belief; that our times call for the "man of deeds and not a man with a creed." Some are even bold in saying, it makes no difference what one believes, if only his life be right; that the

confession of faith is of little or of no concern, if only we have right service. But this is a manifest fallacy and thoroughly wrong. Right thinking and right living go together; one may possibly sometimes be better than his creed, but his life and character are in what he thinks. For as a man thinketh in his heart so is he; and out of his heart are the issues of life. The orthodox heart and the orthodox life are as the fountain and its stream. Words and actions depend on character, and are powerful in their reflex influence on character, and character depends upon what one thinks and believes, and also upon the great and eternal things in which faith anchors itself, and in which thinking finds its largest range and most rapturous exercise. The man who would live godly must first be godly. The water which flows over the iron bed in the hidden secrets of the earth, is chalybeate when it puts out at the spring. The gospel is both life and doctrine, and finds expression in both Christian doctrine and Christian service.

Much has been said adversely also about "*dead orthodoxy*," and perhaps it deserves all that has been said. But why not consider the orthodoxy that is living as to its value and power? When discussing man as our subject, we do not take a corpse as an example, nor is the corpse mistaken for a man. The Westminster Confession of Faith was once like molten lava fresh from burn-

ing hearts and minds; if it be otherwise now, whose fault is it? Why not take an example of living dogma? When Luther on the stairway at Rome found his new experience of grace in one of the greatest of all the dogmas, he became a new man in the realm of truth, an orthodox man with a new creed, and forthwith made a new confession of faith, and found a new power in which he moved the world. It was the power of living dogma. We complain for the want of better living; possibly the deeper want is a better believing—a living faith that is anchored in the deeper, greater, better things. — Herein the soul through the Spirit of truth, gets its connection with the sources of life and power, and finds its largest freedom in the liberty wherewith Christ maketh free.

For this reason a recent writer in philosophy, when speaking of science and dogma in a friendly way, but expressing a psychological necessity, said: "A religious society cannot dispense either with doctrine or doctrinal teaching. The more moral (or rather the more spiritual) it is in character, the more it needs a dogmatic symbol which defines it and explains its *raison d'être*. It will have its teachers as well as its pastors and missionaries." Surely this must be true of the church—especially today, when there are contrary voices with contrary views. And one's Christian confession of faith which determines his own doc-

trinal life and his church relations, is the product of what he finds or thinks he finds in the Scriptures. It is his interpretation of the word of God, an expression or statement of what he believes the Bible teaches. And the days of doctrinal conception and experience are always days of might within the individual soul and in the history of any people.

#### THE SUPREME TEST OF ALL CREEDS.

The place we assign the scriptures in our confession of faith is decisive of nearly all other questions of belief and practice. This is especially true concerning the New Testament and our church life. One may "possess an inward rule of conduct, and along with this a principle of free judgment." Of course he may and must, but his inward rule will need light from without, and his free judgment will need guiding, will need oftentimes curbing and correcting, a mastery, indeed, from another hand than his own—such a guiding mastery as he may find in the word of God. A single look outside of self—to the heights above, to the depths beneath, through other standards than his own, will cure or modify many misconceptions and serve to set one in the right course. Measuring ourselves by ourselves is seldom edifying.

Were you ever puzzled when lying in your sleeper berth at night, in trying to decide which

direction the train was going? A light in the berth even gives no light on the question, but one look out of the window gives the decisive answer. Or were you ever puzzled even to being deceived, when sitting at the car window, your train standing still while another train was passing, you thought yourself moving—saw it with your eyes and felt it down in your being? But one look through the opposite window out in the open breaks the illusion, undeceives your eyes and feeling, and shows the inner error and folly.

So it is in the larger and higher sphere. Man in his best estate needs the light from without, and a standard of measurement other than is possible within his own little sphere, or from the consensus of all that has gone before, apart from the word which God has furnished and which shineth as a light in a dark place. Conscious of his need, man cries out of the dark and out of the storm for the rock that is higher. The answer is in the scriptures, not simply as a book, but in the revelation and unerring word which are able to make wise unto salvation. Especially and preëminently is this true in matters of Christian doctrine and life when one wants, and the soul is crying for, certainty and for certitude.

If the scriptures are not an authority, then we are left without authority in our church life. It is not the case of the scriptures *plus* something else, or the scriptures *versus* something else, but



the scriptures or nothing. This is not a question of individual right of private judgment and interpretation. That with everyone for himself before God, is his inalienable privilege and imperative obligation. But while we may differ in exegesis and interpretation, yet when the meaning is once determined and agreed upon, that is the end of the controversy, and acceptance, belief and practice is the imperative course if our hearts be loyal and our lives obedient to what God has written.

This comes not as an arbitrary edict, but lies deep in our very nature and situation as the inevitable law; it is God's gracious provision for man in his deeper needs. We cannot refuse to eat in answer to the law of hunger. We dare not throw ourselves contrary to the law of gravitation. Why then refuse the light of the sun, turning the day into night, and then lighting our candle as our guide in the most momentous concerns? There are deeper laws than edicts; they are the laws of heart and mind, of conscience and character, of life and destiny; they are imperative in their demands, and carry within themselves their own terrible penalties for infringement. Putting the hand in the fire violates the law in the physical kingdom, and the penalty goes with the act; so surely do the laws in the kingdom of mind and heart have in themselves power to avenge their breaking. We follow nature's laws for the larger service they can render, and count them not hard



but rich in physical good. God appeared in his word, reveals himself to men, and opens the way to the best he can give. It is the offer of his grace and love.

CONCERNING AND ACCORDING TO.

In formulating, therefore, our doctrinal statements for belief and practice, there are two basal words: first, *concerning* the scriptures, and second, *according* to the scriptures. Considering the confession of faith in the figure of an arch, these two words in their full meaning are the foundation on either side of the arch—what the scriptures are in themselves and what they teach for belief and observance. Baptists at different times in their history, and to meet impending claims and conflicts, have issued their confession of faith, and have always given this primal and decisive place to the word of God as their one authority. This is the bed-rock of their faith, the one rule of their practice. None of these confessions were authoritative as a creed, in the sense of dominating others in conduct or belief; but all of them more or less were authoritative as statements of their own agreement as to what they themselves believe—not authoritative, perhaps we should say, but representative of their faith concerning the scriptures and according to the scriptures. And this they apply to the whole round of Christian doctrine and practice, as ex-

pressed in their church life, and in their efforts to serve God on God's plan.

And to this end they have insisted upon right translation, right interpretation, and right observance of the scriptures as the threefold necessity in church life, whether of doctrine or practice. Concerning the scriptures, and according to the scriptures—this has been their battle-cry in all ages. If this is not sufficient, then we are helpless and in the dark; if it is sufficient, then disobedience and disloyalty are our shame; and we suffer in our own wrongdoing. To the law and the testimony, our people make their final appeal, and to the more sure word of prophecy:

“For the prophecy came not in olden times by the will of man, but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Spirit. . . . All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine; . . . that the man of God may be thoroughly furnished unto all good works. . . . Thou hast known the holy scriptures which are able to make wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus. . . .

“Take heed unto thyself, and unto the doctrine; continue in them; for in doing this thou shalt save both thyself and them that hear thee. . . . For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; and that he was

buried, and rose again according to the scriptures.”

In these several declarations two New Testament writers give us a comprehensive statement as to the origin and character, the purpose and value of the scriptures—the Old Testament certainly, and possibly the New Testament also, so far as it had then been written. The word, *moved*, used here by the Apostle Peter, is very strong and significant. It is used in two other places; when Paul’s ship was caught in the storm and was going to pieces, they lifted anchor and “let her *drive*”—the same word, and the ship was *driven* under the power of the cyclone on the sea; and then with the coming of the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost, there was “a sound from heaven, as of a *rushing* mighty wind”—rushing is the same in the original as moved and driven—and the disciples were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak with other tongues as the Spirit gave them utterance. Peter was in that cyclone at Pentecost, knew its power, and said it was so when in the olden times men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Spirit.

Paul, on the other hand, emphasizes the authority of the scriptures in his statement of doctrine, basing all on this, according to the scriptures. He takes Christ’s death, burial, and resurrection, (1) as matter of history, (2) in their doctrinal significance as the atonement for sin, (3) in their

relation to us as having been in our stead, (4) and all according to the scriptures; he admonishes to care and concern for doctrine and commends the scriptures as (1) being holy, (2) as coming through men under the inspiration of God, (3) as being sufficient for doctrine and conduct, and as being (4) able to make wise unto salvation through faith in Jesus Christ.

#### THE NEED TO SHOW WHAT WE BELIEVE.

So we have the inspired writers themselves to furnish this twofold standard, which is of as much value and as deeply needed now as then—perhaps even more needed. And Baptists, whenever they have issued a statement of doctrine or declaration of principles, have followed their example, and applied the standard to the whole round of Christian history and doctrine, first *concerning* the scriptures, second, *according to* the scriptures. In what is generally accepted as their confession of faith there are some twenty or more separate articles of belief and practice, but every article throughout the whole confession represents what they believe the scriptures teach. It is not enough in this day for either a person or people to say, the Bible is our creed; for immediately come the two imperative questions, What is believed concerning the scriptures, and What according to the scriptures? And the answer to these questions makes the confession of faith.

During the war with Spain an American fleet was sailing for Cuba. As the men of war were passing the South Carolina coast a large ocean steamer sailed out from Charleston harbor, headed for the open sea, but without a flag at her mast. She was signaled to run up her flag, but refused; a cannon shot was sent across her bow. Then she hoisted her colors as the symbol of her nationality. It was worth while in those war times to learn who she was, where she was going, what cargo she had on board, and what business she had at sea and in these waters. The confession of faith is something in the nature of a people's banner, or symbol, or colors, showing to all who may need to know, or who care to know, who they are and what they are *concerning* the scriptures and *according to* the scriptures.

Baptists agree with other denominations in many of the great fundamental doctrines, but part with them seriously when we come to other articles of faith and practice. The basal and most imperative need is agreement without equivocation or reserve as to the place which the word of God shall have in the making of our creed. This would well-nigh settle all other questions, if admitted and worked to its full limit. In the early seventies Christian union was much discussed—some people being clamorous for it even to using hard words against those who could not accept their view. My father, one of the earlier preach-

ers of Kentucky, was much interested in the subject from the Baptist standpoint. As the discussion went on and waxed warm, he developed three rules *not as the basis* of union, but as a guide in forming that basis. In all good faith and in a fraternal spirit he proposed these three rules as the Baptist challenge to other denominations, as they laid their several creeds and confessions of faith side by side in comparison for comparative study, as follows :

“1. Agree to adopt and practice whatever we mutually believe that the Bible teaches.

“2. Agree to give up, and strike out of our respective creeds, whatever causes division and which we ourselves do not regard as essential to truth.

“3. Agree to give up, and strike out of our respective creeds, whatever causes division among us and for which we cannot give a plain precept or example in the word of God.”

These rules concerning the scriptures as a basis of agreement, were to make in their application a confession of faith according to the scriptures. Standing in the line of these rules, Baptists, while holding many great fundamental doctrines with others, yet stand aloof in certain other vital matters, and follow the lead of God's word as their own distinct principles and emphasis. For example, take these items of Baptist faith which they show as their banner before all the world: The sufficiency of the scriptures as the

word of God, and our loyalty to them in belief and obedience; Individual responsibility and freedom of conscience in the service of God; Separation of "church and state" in all matters—"a free church in a free state;" a converted church membership of only such as profess a saving knowledge of Christ as their personal Saviour; Congregational and loyal self-government in the churches; Independence and coöperative right of the churches—each one in itself; Baptism with immersion as the only form, and believers as its only subjects—believers being those who, with personal trust, have accepted Christ and personally confess him as their Saviour and Lord; The Lord's Supper within the church and for church members; The purpose of the church to evangelize the world for Christ in the saving of men and the building of the kingdom of our Lord.

#### A PEOPLE WITH DEFINITE BELIEF.

Baptists are not "The Church" with a people, but are a great and glorious people with churches. These distinctive principles root themselves back into other principles more profound and even more important in relation to God and his work of human redemption; at the same time branching out into other and more or less minor items of faith and practice. But all of them are related to each other as one complete and consistent system of truth, are fully comprehended and made clear



in the scriptures. This is expressed sometimes in their confession of faith, sometimes otherwise—never authoritative but declarative and representative of what they believe the scriptures teach and command in precept and example.

In view of present church conditions, it is worth while to consider from this standpoint the place of baptism and the Lord's Supper in the Baptist confession of faith as compared with what others believe and practice. This should be done of course in becoming spirit, and for better understanding and larger fellowship. Other denominations admit the belief and practice of believers' baptism, but depart from the Baptist view in the additional practice of "infant baptism," holding that infants also are to be baptized. They say "believers and their children;" Baptists say, only believers; and finding no word for "infant baptism" in the New Testament, and that it contravenes the very nature of the ordinance and the very command of our Lord, they leave it out of their confession of faith. And so the divergence comes as to the subjects of baptism.

Other denominations admit also that immersion is baptism, and that the immersion of the believer as baptism is valid and scriptural. Indeed, they practice this in a way and upon occasions, and will receive into their churches and fellowship any who have been baptized in Baptist churches. But here again they make divergence from the practice of



our people in the additional belief that sprinkling equally with immersion is "a mode of baptism." Baptists say only immersion, the others say immersion or pouring or sprinkling. But neither sprinkling nor pouring appeared in the New Testament as baptism, and utterly fail to represent the great ordinance as commanded by Christ and practiced by his early disciples. So these are not given a place in the Baptist confession of faith, and mark further divergence between Baptists and others in their church life.

Furthermore, and with hardly a dissenting voice, the other denominations also agree with Baptists that the Lord's Supper is a church ordinance for church members, and that in the appointed order baptism comes first and is a prerequisite to the communion service. This principle, however, others do not follow to its legitimate conclusion, for it justifies and requires the practice in Baptist churches of restricting the communion to those of like faith and order, and who as church members have fellowship in the ordinance. Fellowship in baptism comes first, and is essential to fellowship at the table of the Lord. Baptists concerning the ordinance stand by the rule according to the scriptures—following their confession of faith, but seeing first that the confession of faith follows the word of God—going with others when they can, but standing

apart when they must in faithfulness to the New Testament.

Immersion, therefore, as the form and believers as the subjects of baptism, having the requisite scriptural authority, must be classed among the universals of Christian belief and practice. Sprinkling, on the other hand, as "a mode of baptism," and infants as subjects of baptism, fail of New Testament authority, and for this reason fail also to have any place in Baptist church life—are not among the universals of Christian belief and practice, but on the contrary have been to this day chief factors in dividing the hosts of the Lord. This is a vital issue, and not "a question of mere mode," as is sometimes said, but of the form and subject of baptism, and involves the very meaning and life of the ordinance. Infants are not believers; there is no proxy in obedience and no proxy in the New Testament; and form is not mode and can have no substitute. We must adhere to the original form and require subjects according to the scriptures, otherwise there is disobedience and disloyalty. We might surrender "mere mode" in the interest of larger fellowship, but not the form or the subjects. These must remain without addition or taking away.

It is a question for settlement by the New Testament, and according to the scriptures. These great principles which are common to all should not be violated in the interest of some, and in

sacrifice of allegiance to our King. They rest on the authority of God's word, and are for the conservation of his truth and of his ordinances as he has commanded and set them in his church for observance. The Baptist confession of faith is their banner for the King. His call is personal and imperative; our answer must be in person and joyous obedience. To follow him where he calls—to follow where the banner leads, if only it be the banner of the King—is the crowning glory of discipleship, opens the way for larger achievements in his service and for everlasting renown.

## CHAPTER VIII.

### WHY JOIN THE CHURCH?

THE church came with the coming of Christ, and is of him and for him. There was nothing like it before and nothing like it since except in efforts at imitation. The church is strictly a Christian institution, has a nature and mission all its own, with the imprimatur of heaven upon it. In a comparative study of the world's religions, Christianity stands aloof, unique and incomparable. It makes war on none, but is in purpose and spirit missionary to all, out in the open field with the gospel—the only gospel—of love and mercy, of renewing and cleansing, a light shining in dark places, and “the power of God unto salvation to everyone that believeth.”

#### ORGANIZED FORM OF CHRISTIANITY.

The church is the organic form of Christianity, the embodiment of its history, of its principles and practice, of its precepts, life and service. Charged with all these mighty and weighty matters for God and man, full of hope to the world in its sin and suffering, it is yet a very simple affair in its own organization. The church followed Judaism in the course of history, as a building succeeds to

the scaffolding used in its construction; but Judaism had no church in any sense, nor was it a church in itself. The Old Testament gives us Judaism in its wonderful history and mission for God in the world, but the New Testament gives us the church whose coming marked the new dispensation of God's dealing with man. The one was glorious, the other much more glorious; the one came through Moses, the servant of God, the other came through Jesus Christ the Son of God and the Saviour of men.

The church is an organized body with which one can join himself, entering into its membership and fellowship, the full possessor at once of all its rights, privileges, blessings and opportunities for usefulness. It was taken far, far away from the simplicity and beauty of its original character, when caught in the clutches and corruption of imperial Rome, and the world saw the coming in of the Roman Catholic hierarchy—"The Church," a substitute of the church of Christ and a fourfold composite power of the gospel somewhat, and Judaism somewhat more, of paganism very much, and of civil government a great deal. From that day to this, "The Church" of that fourfold make-up, stands in marked, and oftentimes in painful, contrast to the church of Christ in its New Testament simplicity, power, and lofty mission in the world. And in the course of history, and even now in some countries and in somewhat modified form,

men and even nations have felt the iron heel of "The Church," and they have mistaken "The Church" in its misuse of power and in its spirit of oppression, for the church with its gospel message of redemption and deliverance. "The Church" has never failed to persecute in its spirit of compulsion and tyranny, as occasion required and circumstances permitted, until you can trace its history by the blood of the saints and the fires of the martyrs.

But the church, on the other hand, has never persecuted, has never compelled or sought to compel men, has never crushed men or brought misery or wretchedness into the world. But the rather, like its Master and Author, who is also its heart and life and power, the bruised reed it will not break and the smoking flax it will not quench. Serving as he had led the way, the mission and message of the church is to preach the gospel to the poor, heal the broken-hearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovery of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised, to preach the acceptable year of the Lord. And his preachers also after him as his messengers, carry everywhere the same gracious story of salvation, that God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. Standing in Christ's stead they beseech men to be

reconciled to God. It pleased God through the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe, and whosoever will may come. This is the burden of the song and service of the church from the first until now, hindered and checked oftentimes, but all the while through the centuries moving forward for human redemption and the coronation of the Saviour of men.

Joining the church is the voluntary act of each individual for himself, and on a personal profession of faith in Christ as his Saviour and Lord. There is no other way of admission into its fellowship; and it cannot come by natural birth whether of Abraham's seed or others. Each one acts for himself, and not by proxy or sponsor or god-mother or others. It is each one answering for himself God's gracious call and invitation—heart answering heart, love to love, need to offers of help—made willing through God's Spirit in the day of his power and grace. That is the supreme moment in the soul when in answer to God's call one turns to God in surrender of self and in acceptance of the provision of his grace, and it is the day of power and joy when in his new nature and new-found hope he turns to God's people for companionship and fellowship. The song of the saved has been the same in all ages, and wherever the work of redemption is told—

'Tis done, the great transaction's done,  
I am my Lord's and he is mine.  
He drew me, and I followed on,  
Charmed to confess the power divine.

O happy day! that fixed my choice  
On thee, my Savior and my God.  
Well may this glowing heart rejoice,  
And tell its raptures all abroad.

This is the new song of the heart, in which the saved man celebrates the new life within, and comes as by an inward turning to seek membership in the church of Christ. And joining the church, manifestly, is not the same as becoming a Christian or being saved. However, it follows forthwith, or will if there be opportunity, as a public profession of the new-found life and hope, and the public commitment to Christ and his cause. The church is for the saved, and he comes to tell of his salvation. One needs this as prior fitness and qualification for church membership, otherwise he finds nothing of kindred touch and no music of joy in his church life. It must be that coming to Christ and acceptance of him as Saviour, comes in advance of membership in his church. In the gospel plan of salvation and in the economy of God's grace, we must come through Christ to the church with its ordinances, privileges and service. This is fundamental and needs to be well marked. In coming to the church we need Christ and his salvation as our



fitness for membership, but in coming to Christ in answer to his wondrous call—

All the fitness he requireth  
Is to feel your need of him.  
This he gives you;  
'Tis the Spirit's rising beam.

And as hunger cries for bread, and thirst for the fountain, and the burden for deliverance, so the heart stricken with sin turns to Christ, cries after him out of the depths, and finds in him all and in all.

#### EXAMPLES OF NEW TESTAMENT CHURCHES.

All this finds ample illustration in the churches and church life of the New Testament. These might be selected at random almost, but for our purpose, the following are chosen: The church at Jerusalem, The church at Damascus, The church at Antioch in Syria, and the Seven churches of Asia Minor. Their history is told in the Acts of the Apostles and in the opening vision vouchsafed to John on the Isle of Patmos. The account is meager, yet the story in each case is full of significance as showing the lines of progress for the kingdom of our Lord.

*The church at Jerusalem* was the first church, and for a season the only church. It was a very simple affair as an organization, but great out of measure in the personnel of its membership. Its

history, though very briefly told, is a record of startling incidents, and to this day is wonderful as a subject of study. It was a church of marvelous power, and put its impress on the world for the time then present and for all succeeding time, in a way out of comparison with all other organizations in the world's history. The first chapter of the Acts, as revealing its ground work and course of separation, is too much overshadowed by the glory of the second chapter. For forty days Christ went in and out among them, showing himself risen from the dead by many infallible proofs, giving them commandments through the Holy Spirit, teaching them the things pertaining to the kingdom of God, commanding their stay in Jerusalem until they should be endued with power from on high, and appointing them to bear witness for himself after the power had come upon them, unto the uttermost parts of the earth.

Never were there another such forty days of schooling. They sat at the feet of their risen Lord, heard his gracious words which were taking on new meaning, and the church was ready for Pentecost when Pentecost came—the day destined to be quoted forever as the day of the Spirit's coming and power. Simon Peter himself, though for three years with Jesus previously, came out of those forty days with new and marvelous insight to the meaning of the scriptures as appears in the way he uses them. His preaching with its

mighty power of conviction and conversion, the baptism in the Holy Spirit that went before and the baptism of the converts that followed, the conduct of the saved and the continued working of saving grace—these were the distinguishing marks of Pentecost. The church came to a new meaning and a new power. Three thousand gladly received the word of salvation and were baptized; there was no need of inquiring why join the church, and the kingdom of Christ got a new ranking and rating among men.

There had been organization before, but after the baptism in the Spirit and the consequent endowment with power from on high, the church became *organific*—endowed with spiritual power, missionary in spirit, purpose and effect, self-propagating and capable of reproducing after its kind. So it came to pass that the gospel went abroad as a new and mighty force among men. Other churches were organized, and the number rapidly multiplied. Men were turned to the Lord and sought membership, companionship, fellowship in the churches.

*The church at Damascus* must have come through these processes, a kind of first fruits of the early missionary efforts, beginning at Jerusalem and reaching after the uttermost parts of the earth. More is known of this ancient and famous city than of the church; and yet Damascus would not have been mentioned probably in

the New Testament but for the fact, that the disciples of our Lord, "men and women," made the name and cause of Christ so great as to excite the wrath of the persecutors at Jerusalem with young Saul of Tarsus as ringleader. He set his heart on the church at Damascus as he had laid his hand on the church at Jerusalem "to vex them."

But there was another force at work, a power which he did not take into account. It overtook him in the way and overcame him, making of him a marvelous trophy of grace. He left Jerusalem breathing out threatenings and slaughter, armed with human authority to do his utmost to make an end of disciples and discipleship; but he entered Damascus blind, led by the hand of another and inquiring what he should do. He finds a teacher made ready for him; his blindness is gone, the Holy Spirit is upon him, and in the joy of new-found hope and in obedience to his new-found Lord, he makes haste to be baptized. And ever afterward he counted his baptism as a burial with Christ unto death and his resurrection to a new life. He was not disobedient to the heavenly vision, but began at once to preach the gospel he had tried to destroy, and became a mighty power for the building of the kingdom of God. And men glorified Christ in him. The conversion and experience of Saul of Tarsus, together with the glorious life he lived for Christ, makes tremendous answer to the question, Why join the

church? The church at Damascus surely must have felt a new impulse and its membership gathered fresh strength on that day in which this ringleader against Christ took his stand among them to advocate his cause, and became a "ringleader" for Christ.

*The church at Antioch* was one of the best of the New Testament churches. This city, while greatly distinguished in secular history, first appeared in the sacred record as a preaching station; and then almost immediately came the church which made its wonderful mark for Christ and his cause. Its first preachers were from Jerusalem, and the word of God was glorified. "The hand of the Lord was with them; and a great number believed and turned to the Lord." Much people were added to the Lord, and the grace of God was made manifest, and there was great rejoicing; they were exhorted that with purpose of heart they should cleave unto the Lord.

And Barnabas was sent to them from the church at Jerusalem—the first record of a missionary being sent out by one church—a kind of Home Mission movement, getting ready for the later Foreign Mission movement. The coming of Barnabas greatly increased the work. He soon brought Saul to his aid, who was not yet called Paul. The revival lasted a whole year, with many being added to the Lord, and the church growing mightily in number and power. It was

a planting from the church at Jerusalem, but had no organic connection; but while independent, it was sympathetic, coöperative, and in a notable way showed great deference to the church where the work had begun. There was almost constant going from one to the other in the way of mutual helpfulness and coöperation, and each felt the other's power.

Christ was in the church at Antioch in very real and vital way—the center of gravity, of inspiration, of efficiency, all and in all to the church as to the individual believer. Through him the church became powerful in aggressiveness, and filled the whole city with talk about Christ. So much so, indeed, that their enemies, marking at once their chief distinction and their chief business, called them Christ-ians—Christians, a nickname then, but forever illustrious. The church was evangelistic, and great numbers were converted in the home city. And having been itself projected from Jerusalem, the church at Antioch began to project itself abroad for the extension of the kingdom.

Possessed of the Holy Spirit in large measure, this church, like the church at Jerusalem, developed in remarkable way the organic principle, the missionary spirit and purpose, the self-propagating power—reaching out for planting and making other churches for the glory of Christ. And in the church the Holy Spirit said: "Separate

Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them," and these two men went forth in the Spirit's command and power for further conquest in the gospel. And the church at Antioch, from being a Home Mission field, became a center for Foreign Missions. There is no need here for the question, Why join the church? Saved men sought companionship with those who celebrated the Saviour's name. Added first to the Lord himself by living faith, then as outward manifestation of their new relation, they were added without delay to the people whose chief joy and crowning glory was in the Lord's service.

*The seven churches of Asia Minor*, as supplementing the thought from Antioch, shows in beautiful and telling way what the churches are to Christ. John's first vision was a vision of the churches, and one like unto the Son of Man, clothed with power and walking in their midst. These were as seven golden candlesticks, holding the light which should lighten the world. He was among them for their protection, observing their life, giving reproof and correction, or approval and commendation. It was a marked exhibition of the Saviour's life in the life of the church, of his concern and care for the churches, and how dear they are to him.



## INDIVIDUALITY IN CHURCH LIFE.

This emphasized in striking way the individuality of the churches. These seven letters were sent to seven churches—one letter to each church called by name, and not to The Church of Asia Minor, as if all were grouped into one. This is the rule throughout the New Testament in speaking of one church or a group of churches. For example, the churches of Judea, the churches of Galatia, and never once in all its pages is there any mention of “The Church,” an expression which came centuries later in Christian history, and is so conspicuous in modern and current literature. Christ in his care and grace and saving power, never lost sight of the individual, whether church or member or man.

The individual church was never made subordinate in an aggregate of churches, nor the individual member in the aggregate membership. With Christ and in his mission through the churches, Ephesus was Ephesus, Sardis was Sardis, Pergamos was Pergamos, and so with all the churches. He knew each one through and through, and gave his care and concern as they severally had need. This is a fundamental principle, and should be emphasized now in its full significance. His word then and his word now is: Behold, I stand at the door and knock; and if *any one* will open to me, I will come in and will



sup with him and he with me. He that hath ears to hear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto *the churches*—but not one word about “The Church.”

Individuality is not only not lost in the body, but is emphasized, honored, and made effective, when consecrated to Christ and his service in the fellowship of others. This is the very heart and meaning of church life and membership in the church. There is nothing higher or more blessed in human heart and life than serving God on God’s plan. It is movement in the highway of the Lord. This is the course in which Christ assured his disciples of his presence and companionship alway even unto the end. Lo, I am with you, was his parting word, and his word now from the throne, when you go in my service—when making disciples among the nations—when baptizing as I have commanded—when teaching observance of all things which I have commanded. Following his lead means membership in his church, and membership in his church means greater efficiency in his service, more of renown for him and greater display of his saving grace in the building of his kingdom among men.

#### THE WHY THEN, AND THE WHY NOW.

Every reason for membership in the church of Christ, as illustrated in the churches listed here and in others of the New Testament period, is of

equal force and weight today. It was then, and is now, a question of duty and obedience, but much more a question of heavenly privilege and of finding a supply of spritual needs. Whenever and wherever the gospel was preached, and men were saved and became disciples, churches came as an inevitable result and necessity. Churches were multiplied as the disciples went abroad preaching the gospel. It was the working out of the law of grace—as if in churches and church life the gospel comes to full flower as a tree beautiful in bloom and blossom, in foliage and fruitage.

A fourfold power worked to this end—works to this end now as then—as a holy compulsion, ruling in the heart of the believer with his new life of joy and hope.

1. The power of spiritual affinity, fellowship which brings disciples together, like seeking like, heart answering to heart, drawing and responding one to the other, in a common experience of grace.

2. The need for edification—one of the basal purposes in church life—the church being God's chosen and appointed method for Christian culture and character making. Growth in grace comes but slow, if at all, indeed, when standing aloof from God's plan and provisions of grace.

3. The spirit of obedience. This is sensitive and powerful in the new heart—the spirit of the

new man in Christ Jesus answering to the call of his word. Not only willingness, but earnest desire and joy in doing what the Lord has commanded. It is a masterful and mastering passion of the new heart, with the ring of purpose and triumph in his voice as he seeks his Lord's appointed ways. Saul of Tarsus made haste to baptism; so did the three thousand on the day of Pentecost; so did the Ethiopian, and then went on his way rejoicing. The spirit of obedience brings the saved into church relation and church fellowship, and is the basis of all church life. It is the conquering power in the believer's heart, and makes him a conquering power in the world. Under its power he takes his stand with Christ and his people, for the honor and triumph of their King.

4. Opportunity for service. He can do more associated with others than he can do by himself. In the church he combines with others and makes might with the many for the furtherance of the gospel. This is God's purpose in the church, and church membership in the fulfilling of his purpose and the working out of his plans.

Christ is the magnet principle in all church life. Between him and the believer it is as magnet answering to magnet—drawing and responding. The believer in Christ seeks those like-minded with himself and like of heart—grace calling unto grace, and grace responding unto grace—and all

as one clinging to him as their Saviour and Lord. There is no compulsion here except the compulsion of love, and no loss of liberty. No man is more free than Christ's bondsman. In the aggregate of church membership there is no sacrifice or abridgement of selfhood, but that larger freedom of brotherhood in Christ and of common interest and hopes. The church is for the saved, and membership answers the deep need and cry of discipleship. There is no bondage like the bondage of love, so binding and compelling, so full of satisfaction and joy. And there is no love like the love of Christ which constraineth us; we wear his yoke in service, and find our highest joy in keeping his commandments.

When grace has wrought its work, and the heart is rejoicing in new life and new hope, the person does not stop to inquire, Why join the church? That is the thing he wants, and the question has no place in his heart. That was settled when he found the Lord, or, rather, when the Lord found him. Christ being the magnet principle in the church, and Christ being in the believer's heart as his salvation and hope of glory, then the believer and church will not be long in coming together. As the homing-pigeon let loose far away from his place of abode, darts upward like an arrow from the bow, sweeps in circle after circle as if to get his bearing, and then drawn by some unknown power within, turns its flight

homeward to its own for companionship and rest. Or as two steel needles, both alike except one has been belted and magnetized by the electric current. One of them will lie wherever and however placed—would just as soon be in one place as another, and it makes no difference, but not so the other, which has felt the magnet touch and power, for its course and choice and pointing have all been fixed. Not less surely does the believer cling to his Lord or seek his Lord's people. Why join the church? finds its answer truly in the Lord's commandments, but even more deeply in the renewed heart where deliverance came and set the captive free. In his freedom he finds his rapturous joy in the companionship and fellowship of the saved, and in the service of the Saviour of him and them.

## CHAPTER IX.

### WHY JOIN THE BAPTIST CHURCH?

**T**HIS question is in addition to the question of the preceding chapter, Why join the Church? and is justified, if not made necessary, both by its importance and because of the present situation among the followers of Christ. In a given community, for example, or in the world at large, there are churches of the several denominations—a Baptist church among the others. They are all called churches, composed professedly of Christian people, and represent more or less distinct phases of Christian doctrine and life. They have much in common of belief and practice, much also of sorrow and comfort, of joys also and of hopes, and very much of the same general purpose to honor Christ and to advance his cause and kingdom in the world.

Why may not a person who at heart is a Christian and lover of the Lord, join one of these churches as well as the other? That question is legitimate, and is greatly emphasized by modern circumstances. This situation, however, which is now so common as to make the question almost a daily occurrence, had no counterpart whatever in the New Testament period. There was at

Jerusalem the one church, at Damascus and Antioch also the one church in each city, and in Asia Minor the several cities each had its one local church. And these churches were all alike in the fundamentals and essentials of Christian belief and practice, though varying somewhat in the merely incidental such as would arise in their several communities.

The New Testament in one sense of the word makes no provision for this change of condition among the followers of Christ, since these several and somewhat conflicting bodies of Christians did not exist at that time. They are here now by the very exuberance of growth, and show in many ways the triumph of the gospel; but it is nevertheless the result of error from many complications, the relic largely of early departures from the truth and of divergence from the original pattern of church life. The situation is a matter of serious and even painful regret, though manifestly overruled for the furtherance of the gospel—good coming out of evil under the providence of God, yet in no sense justifying or even palliating the evil.

#### DISTINCTIVE BELIEF AND PRACTICE.

But the New Testament, on the other hand, is fully equal to this situation, and should have our unbounded confidence and unqualified acceptance. It is the book for all time and countries, and in

its wide sweep of precept and example in church life, and in its record of the teachings of Christ and his disciples, and in its great fundamental principles, it speaks the one sufficient word for the present confusion of tongues, if only we will hear what the Spirit says to the churches. "A superficial examination may draw from the spectacle (of varying types and historical forms of Christianity) a lesson of indifference; a more conscientious and attentive study finds in it an opposite lesson, a lesson of an ever-pressing obligation on both individuals and churches never to repose in a deceitful satisfaction, but to progress unceasingly; for Christianity is nothing if it is not in us at once an ideal which is never reached and an inner force which ever urges us beyond ourselves." There is nothing here for discouragement, but very urgent reasons for care, concern and courage in our church life, and enough also to awaken desire and even ambition to give the world in ourselves and in our churches the highest possible type of Christian faith and practice, of Christian character and conduct.

Taking the New Testament, therefore, as our standard, and with the set purpose to make it our rule of belief and obedience, we return to the question, Why may not a person who is a believer in Christ as his Saviour join one of these churches as well as the other? Some count all these churches of equal merit, and some even go so far



as to say they would just as soon join one as the other. This last statement, however, though often made, will hardly ever hold good, for these very persons, when pressed, will soon develop a preference—and generally speaking, the preference will be based on such things as should not at all decide one's church relation, while vital matters are left without consideration. These churches may be one as good as the other, when considered in themselves, or when in comparison with one another, but not when measured by New Testament precept and example. Here we need to be faithful with ourselves, especially fair and loyal to the truth as it is in Christ Jesus.

But our question for the present is, *Why join the Baptist church?* And this question again takes on larger proportion and resolves itself into the larger question, why should Baptists maintain a separate existence as a people and in churches? These questions find an easy and sufficient answer in the twofold fact that, as has been set out in the preceding pages, Baptists have a historical line of their own reaching back far into the centuries and absolutely distinct from all others, and also a system of doctrine and practice in which they are unique and separate, and that, too, in things essential and of real moment. Baptist faith and Baptist practice make Baptist churches necessary, and open the way for membership to those who believe

and who walk as they walk in the commandments and ordinances of the Lord.

Church life has its basis in church membership, and church membership again, if it means anything, must surely mean fellowship—the agreement in heart and life, in belief and practice. One should determine his church relation not by incidental circumstances like family ties or convenience or social consideration, but by his desire and purpose and conviction to follow Christ as he hath made known in the New Testament his will and ways. An incident is recalled which illustrates this point. In one of my pastorates a Baptist woman presented herself for membership in the Presbyterian church. She told the session in substance that she was not a Presbyterian, did not believe in sprinkling or in baptizing infants, that she was leaving her church to join theirs simply to be with her husband, who was a Presbyterian, and for the sake of peace in the family—and she was received. The thing greatly shocked me, being out of keeping with the simplest laws of church membership, and contrary to all my thinking of the doctrinal life and lofty character of the Presbyterians. And even to this day I cannot think well of it, and have never encouraged anyone to change his or her church relation except on a change of convictions.

## FELLOWSHIP IN CHURCH RELATION.

Church fellowship is fourfold in character, as set out in a preceding chapter, and is based upon a fourfold affinity: (1) Fellowship in conversion—*spiritual* affinity from a common experience of grace; (2) Fellowship in doctrine—*doctrinal* affinity, oneness of belief and practice in the things commanded by Christ; (3) Fellowship in the ordinances—*ceremonial* affinity, holding the same views as to baptism and the Lord's Supper in their spirit, form, and purpose; (4) Fellowship in service—affinity of common interest and purpose, fulfilling the will of God in a coöperative church life, and serving God on God's plan according to his commandments.

Baptists have no fellowship with sprinkling as a "mode of baptism and the outward sign of an inward cleansing;" they have no fellowship with the "baptizing of infants as the children of the covenant." Baptists have no fellowship with immersion as "baptism for the remission of sins," or as helping in the matter of "baptismal regeneration," or as being in any way essential to salvation, or making of baptism a saving ordinance or as the act of completing salvation. And for this reason, manifestly, a Baptist could not with any consistency make his church home with either Pedobaptists or with the Disciples. And they equally, if true and genuine, could not be

at home in Baptist churches—there could be no concord, no fellowship, in the doctrine or ordinances, no doctrinal affinity, no ceremonial affinity.

One should by all means, following the New Testament as his guide, seek membership with that church whose belief and practice are in accord with its requirements. This is imperative. One should read for himself, judge for himself, decide for himself, and then be loyal to Christ in the things which he has commanded and in which he himself set us the example in his own high acts. This is of much more serious import than many seem to suppose. If one believes in infant baptism as a commandment of Christ, he cannot, without being inconsistent and disloyal, throw his influence against it, as he necessarily would do by his membership in a Baptist church.

On the other hand, how can one who is a Baptist from conviction hold membership in a church which practices infant baptism, while he himself believes that baptizing of infants is contrary to the law of Christ, that it violates the great ordinance in every particular, that it has caused untold persecution of the saints of God, that it interferes with personal rights and personal obedience? There is no church home for a Baptist except in Baptist churches—a church life otherwise formed is wrong at the base and wrong throughout, and brings a responsibility

which one should tremble to assume. There is no loss or limitation of personal and individual responsibility in church membership, but here, as everywhere, each one must give account of himself unto God—for his belief and practice as well as other things.

Between Baptists and others there may be agreement in some items of faith and practice, while between their respective systems, taken as a whole, the difference is radical and the divergence imperative—making each a separate and distinct people who stand apart from each other by conviction and in what they think the word of God teaches. This is where the battle is fought, and the victory won or lost. Here is where men are tested, and where loyalty to Christ comes in conflict with other and lower interests. Take, for example, the Baptists and Presbyterians,<sup>4</sup> and look at the case honestly and in a spirit becoming two great denominations. Concerning the great doctrines, in substance for the most part, and largely also in statement, they find agreement and fellowship, are more alike, indeed, than any others in this respect. They have spiritual affinity, and in good measure doctrinal affinity. But as to the form of church government, and as to the ordinances, there is hardly a single point of agreement—no fellowship in the ordinances, no ceremonial affinity.

On the other hand, take Baptists and the Disciples. They agree somewhat as to their congregational form of church government, and entirely as to immersion being the only form of baptism. Some, seeing this and taking a superficial view, are quick to say there is little or no difference between them. Whereas the Baptists are further removed from the Disciples, and the difference between them is more radical and essential than between the Baptists and almost any other denomination. Between them there is no ceremonial affinity, or doctrinal affinity, with even a lacking in spiritual affinity, inasmuch as they differ in experimental religion and in an experience of grace. They differ as to the meaning and design of baptism; they differ as to who shall be baptized—agreeing that the only subject for baptism is a believer, but differing as wide as the poles as to what is meant by a believer. The Disciples consider the believer one who is seeking salvation, is in process of being saved, and whose salvation is completed and consummated in his baptism. But with the Baptists, on the other hand, a believer is one who “hath everlasting life” and is *already saved*; that his salvation is complete when he accepts Christ as his Saviour, and that he comes to baptism a saved man, desiring to obey his Lord in his Lord’s appointed way. And this disagreement furthermore roots itself back again in fundamental doctrines concerning

God and sin, concerning Christ and the Holy Spirit, and their respective work in human redemption. How, then, can two walk together except they be agreed?

#### FOLLOWING THE NEW TESTAMENT.

We need in all this to bear ourselves humbly before God and nobly toward each other. It surely becomes us to go to the utmost limit of fraternal dealing with each other. But not to the point—no, not for a moment—of disregarding these great radical differences and of being disloyal to the truth. One must look to his heart and its condition, and to his conscience before God, must look to the New Testament as to what it calls on him to do, and then answer the question, Why join the Baptist church? and settle his church life by his convictions and in obedience to the word of God.

But some make short work of the whole matter by saying it makes no difference about doctrine, no difference about the ordinances, no difference about church membership. But this is making riot of things most sacred and vital, of things which Christ incorporated as a part of his system of doctrine and life, and commanded of all who love him. It sets at naught his very word of command, sets aside also his example as unworthy of our following, and puts discredit upon his whole plan of the church and the life



of its members. It does make a difference of far-reaching significance and power what church one joins, what he does with the commandments and ordinances of the Lord, and what he does with the church which Christ has set for the conquest of his kingdom.

The question of joining the church, after one has surrendered to Christ as his Saviour, becomes the primal and pressing claim on his new life. And at the very first, asking for his allegiance and loyalty, he is confronted with the ordinances of the Lord's house—Baptism and the Lord's Supper. They become, in the very nature of the case, of commanding importance and of urgent moment. In the faith and practice of Baptist churches these ordinances are given a rank and distinction, the same in form, spirit and purpose, which they hold in the New Testament. And the Baptist view of the ordinances, when taken in its full meaning and doctrinal relation, commends itself to the Christian conscience and to the renewed heart in its earliest love and spirit of obedience.

In this as a distinct article of faith we follow Christ and his apostles in precept and example, and in the emphasis which they give to these great ordinances. In the New Testament baptism has the more frequent mention, but is not of greater importance. The two ceremonies, calling for ceremonial fellowship and affinity in their



observance, are coördinate—as the two sides of one sphere, supplementing each other and making more beautiful and powerful their symbolic import. Christ instituted the Memorial Supper with such words of tenderness and circumstances of trying moment as to fix it forever in the hearts and church life of those who love him. He then placed the ordinance in his final commission, and his disciples, following his word and example, made it prominent in their preaching and in the organic life of the New Testament churches. The Christian world, in recognition of this pre-eminence, has called this ceremony the Christian Holy of Holies. And in Baptist churches today this memorial of our Lord speaks the imperial word—as his banner, bearing the blood-stain of the cross, and the rallying point of love and loyalty. And Baptism also, as the other great ordinance, is so prominent in New Testament record that, with its omission from our faith and preaching, there can be no New Testament gospel, no New Testament evangelism, no New Testament church. John was sent to baptize, and came preaching the kingdom of God and baptism unto repentance. Multitudes came to him and were baptized in the Jordan, confessing their sins. Jesus himself came to John, the startling wonder of all, and was immersed in the Jordan, having walked sixty miles or more to be baptized by the man sent of God with commission to baptize.

And having made through the new and heavenly ordinance his manifestation to Israel and the entrance to his public ministry, he gave it also permanent and essential place in the gospel system.

The apostles and early disciples likewise, and forthwith, following his example and commandments, gave baptism a place of great distinction. They made it the honorable badge of discipleship in their preaching, an essential mark in profession of faith—the public putting on of Christ in baptism. It precedes the Lord's Supper as prerequisite, so set by the Lord's word of command, and is of equal rank with it and of imperative moment. And like the Memorial Supper, and with monumental meaning and beauty, it carries in figure the same great doctrines of our Lord's death, burial and resurrection, and of the believer's blessed union with him—of his being risen with Christ to walk in newness of life.

#### THE ONE PATTERN FOR ALL.

The following illustration shows somewhat the place of baptism in the teaching and church life of the New Testament, and gives emphasis to its importance in our belief and obedience. Using a knife on the New Testament (a cheap or well-worn copy), cut from its pages every reference to Baptism—then see what you have left. John's baptism is gone; the baptism of Jesus, with that

wonderful word of his Father's approval, disappears; a fearful cut is made in the Lord's final commission, breaking his authority, and marring if not nullifying forever its remaining part. The baptism of the three thousand on the day of Pentecost disappears as the beautiful badge of gospel triumph and the Spirit's saving power; so the baptism of Cornelius and his household. The baptism of Saul of Tarsus goes from the record as his loving act of obedience to his new-found Saviour and the symbol of his burial and resurrection with Christ. The baptism at Philippi, at Rome, at Colosse, at Corinth—all have been cut away. And in their place where you have applied the knife to the Word of God, there are gaping wounds in its pages—not unlike the wounds opened on Calvary.

Now look at your book. It is no longer the New Testament, and the disfiguring, mutilating, cutting into its sacred pages, is the work of your own hand—and yet you profess allegiance to the New Testament as your rule of authority in faith and practice. But you protest that you would not do that—and *you would not*. And yet that is precisely what is done in much of the talk we have about baptism, precisely what is done in much of the present day evangelism and in the regular preaching of the gospel. This is not a plea to make extra place for the ordinance, but only for its rightful and normal place. Anyone

putting baptism into his preaching as John did, as Peter did, as Paul did, would certainly be called a Baptist, as with John, whom God sent to baptize, and who made his name *The Baptist* for all succeeding time.

The same test might be applied to the Lord's Supper—but no, no, you would not do that—your heart would fail you—you stay your hand and knife lest you reöpen the wound in his side. Even the thought of it makes one shudder—the pen moves heavily and with hesitation. But, O reader, why should one clamor against mutilating the book with knife or hand, while in his heart and life he counts these great ordinances of little consequence? They are called oftentimes “mere rights,” “mere ceremonies;” are often thought unworthy of one's care and obedience, and given no place in the creed and life; and no place either in the settlement of the great question of church membership, or in making public profession of faith in Christ. A word-cut may be severer than a knife-cut, and you may be doing that in your church life today. This is the plea of the Baptist faith, the plea of Baptist churches in their effort to be true and loyal to Christ, by being true and loyal in his ordinances, and in the keeping of his commandments.

This is our answer to the question which heads this chapter, Why join the Baptist church? In faith and practice Baptists seek the New Testa-

ment pattern of church life, with the New Testament as their sufficient law and supreme authority; they offer a church whose first qualification for membership is conversion and public profession of faith in Christ as personal Saviour and Lord; a church democratic in principles, whose polity and government are congregational and within itself, free from "Church Courts" and gradation of officials; a church in which the ordinances are preserved in their original spirit, form and purpose; a church which holds dear the great fundamental doctrines of the gospel as its system of faith and marking its distinct doctrinal character and life, as it stands in the world for the honor and service of Christ; a church also of individual efficiency both for itself as a church among churches, and for its several members in Christian activity and spiritual power.

Baptists as a people are a great host for the Lord. On the one hand they are free from every form of hierarchical government and from every phase of "The Church" principle and practice; but on the other hand they are organized into separate, independent churches, which are free in themselves, and yet coöperative and coöperating in associations and conventions, with the widest possible range for the furtherance of the gospel and for evangelizing the world. What Baptists really are we may have to confess is not commensurate with their lofty ideals. But *this is their*

*ideal*, the one high aim for which they set their hearts and hopes—the New Testament pattern in their churches and church life. There is nothing nobler, or more heroic, in the struggles of our times, than to stand before the world as the loyal exponents of the New Testament doctrine with the New Testament spirit, whether in church or churches, in member or members.

This is the ever-pressing obligation of our people for the present and in the prospect, and will be their crown of glory in the fulfillment of their hopes and the consummation of their purpose. Where there is agreement with others, it is recognized with gladness and with coöperative response; but when there is divergence from the New Testament, as they count divergence, they hold it not as a matter for indifference or compromise, but rather the call of high heaven for caution and courage and action. To follow Christ as they read the word, means—to *follow him*, to stand and withstand along the line of his commandments and for church membership in conformity to his law, and for church life set for his glory in serving God on God's plan.

## CHAPTER X.

### THE CHURCH AND ITS PUBLIC SERVICES.

THERE is nothing of the Star Chamber in the church of Christ, or in its services. Its foundations were laid in the open, and nothing was done in a corner. This has always been true of the church of God in its service and worship, except when the church, hunted down and persecuted by "The Church," hid itself away in mountains, or worshipped in caves and dens, or such other places as offered them safety. There is here, from the very nature of the church and its service, no secret confessional between priests and either penitent or the coverer up of crime. The "Confessional" is out of place in the church of Christ, though it may become "The Church" in its method and spirit, in its pretension and purpose.

### THE UNIQUENESS OF THE CHURCH ASSEMBLY.

We need to give fresh emphasis to the unity of the church, its uniqueness and marked distinction when assembled for public service. Unity of the church is more than unity of believers, and fellowship in church life and membership is something more and additional to the universal brotherhood

of those who believe in Christ as their Saviour. There is here an element all its own, a power in whose magic workings the many are wrought into one—many members but one body. The church is a people, born each one from above, born not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of the Spirit of God, and made one in Christ Jesus. It is the individual, local church of which we are speaking, and which, being complete and independent in organic life and structure, is a people who are wrought into marvelous oneness of body and unity of spirit.

Its members are made one in the noblest bonds of fellowship. The membership, however small or however large, is yet one—as the flower in its several parts is yet one in structure, symmetry of form, in beauty of color and fragrance. “The body is one, and hath many members; and all the members of that one body, being many, are one body. For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether Jews or Greeks, whether bond or free; and have all been made to drink into one Spirit.” We have lost sight largely of the unity of the church, partly because of so much indefinite thought about “The Church,” and partly because we have failed to appreciate the dignity of character and loftiness of purpose, the supremacy and sovereignty of a single, individual church of Jesus Christ.



Those great words of the Apostle Peter were written not of a local church as such, but of disciples at large, as being saved and in their relation to Christ, yet those very words describe to the letter the people who make up the membership of such a church—of the churches of Christ wherever found. The church, and we wish to write it down with all emphasis, is of “a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a peculiar people; that they should show forth the praises of him who hath called them out of darkness into the marvelous light; which in time past were not a people, but are now the people of God.” And God is not ashamed to be called their God, because he hath prepared them a city. Such, indeed, is the church wherever found, when in life and spirit, it is commensurate with its unique nature, with its lofty purpose, with its noble and mighty mission, and shines in the darkness as a light for Jesus Christ and his glorious work of grace. This may be ideal, but it is nevertheless true, and gives definiteness to the real, with efficiency and glory to the practical in church life and church service.

Christ himself placed on his church the badge of supremacy and sovereignty in its relation to all other organizations. And its coming together in public assembly is one of its distinct and essential marks. Herein is almost its very heart and life. Its membership as individual believers, may of

course be widely scattered, and yet come together as one in the public service. And the church assembled in such public service, is unlike all other gatherings as to character and purpose, as to privilege and spirit. It assembles primarily to worship God and to honor Jesus Christ as King in Zion and the Lord of all. And to this *assembly* of the saints in their fellowship and communion, is given the special distinction with its special privilege and even blessing: "If two of you shall agree on earth as touching anything that they shall ask, it shall be done for them of my Father which is in heaven. For where *two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them.*" Our Lord on previous occasions had emphasized the importance and reward of praying in secret—within the closet and the door shut; and his precept in this regard had the emphasis of his own personal example. And he does not here weaken, or discount, or disparage in any way the blessedness and necessity for worshiping in private. But as something additional, he takes notice of *the coming together of his people*, and promises something extra in the fullness of privilege and blessing—puts himself among them—marks their agreement in prayer—and commends their assembly for worship. Have we yet learned, or will we be always learning and even then never coming to know, the full significance and power of the *church in*

*prayer*, as at Pentecost, or on the night of Peter's deliverance from prison and from the watching soldiers? "Satan trembles when he sees the weakest saint on his knees," but much more when the multitude turn as one to the throne of grace with agreement of heart in purpose and petition. It is a symphony of immeasurable power, for a church in prayer has connection with the throne and is in touch with God.

Count this a true and practical thing when the church assembles in public worship, when there is agreement in prayer. Viewed in this light and from this angle of vision, the midweek prayer-meeting takes on new meaning and becomes of tremendous import. For that is the church assembled in prayer—the coming together of two or three in Christ's name with him in their midst—distinctly the prayer service with songs of praises. This word *agreement*—symphony—is very significant. There is in figure of speech the thought of tuning and keying and bringing into harmony two or more instruments of music. As a great orchestra with many instruments, but all striking the same key, and the same note in their symphony, will stir the soul, and move us with marvelous strains of music. That is the harmony of many voices, the agreement of many instruments, the symphony of sound, but oh, what is this compared with the agreements of hearts, the symphony of desire and petition before the throne?

It is like the symphony in the singing of angels, the richest music on earth. Here is where heaven and earth touch—heaven comes down our souls to greet, and glory crowns the mercy seat. Oh, that wonderful, wonderful word, let it be learned over again and made familiar with every heart and in the church life of every member: “where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them. If two of you shall *agree* touching anything they shall ask, it shall be done of my Father which is in heaven.” And this is the mid-week prayer-meeting, where Christ is in the midst of his church, and out of which come the energies and power for blessing beyond anything we have yet dreamed. It may well be called the power-house in our church life, whether for the individual member or the church as a whole. Here we find the storage battery, which means increased energy and effectiveness in service for Christ, and for the extension of his kingdom among men.

#### THE SET DAY FOR CHURCH WORSHIP.

But Sunday, by common consent and for nearly two thousand years, has been the great day for the churches and their public service. This came not so much by command as by concord of circumstances and fitness of forces making it the day of all other days. This is the memorial day, occurring and recurring every week, of the resur-

rection of Jesus from the dead. Every Sunday is a new celebration of that glorious triumph over death and the grave, and shall ever stand as the greatest of all days with the followers of our Lord—not, of course, to either the exclusion or prejudice of other days and other services, but as having special mark and emphasis and fitness.

On that wonderful morning—the first day of the week—Jesus our Lord, who had died on the cross and been buried in the new tomb, reappeared as the risen Christ before his disciples who were *gathered together* in one place; and then again, eight days later—on the first day of the week again—he found them assembled in the one place. From that time on and until now, the first day of the week stands separate and apart. Other days may equal it in sacredness and even in service, but it stands alone in its marvelous significance. What a day it was at the first—that first resurrection morning! And from that time to this good hour, the first day of the week has held the chief place in the calendar as the Lord's day—the lordliest day of all the seven as they come and go with alternating light and darkness. It set aside the Jewish Sabbath as a distinct victory in the world's timetable, and took rank all its own, marking a new date in the calendar, as the resurrection of Jesus had marked the world's history with a new and startling wonder.

This is the day the Lord hath made ;  
He calls the hours his own.  
Let heaven rejoice, let earth be glad,  
And praise surround the throne.

Today he rose and left the dead,  
And Satan's empire fell ;  
Today the saints his triumphs spread,  
And all his wonders tell.

Hosanna, in the highest strains,  
The church on earth can raise !  
The highest heaven in which he reigns  
Shall give him nobler praise.

This is the universal song of the redeemed host of the Lord. And now, this first day of the week has come and gone for nearly one hundred thousand times. With its every return the Lord's people somewhere around the world have marked its coming as the coming of the Lord's day—the memorial of his resurrection, a fresh coronation of the risen Christ, now enthroned at the right hand of the majesty on high as King of kings and Lord of lords. There are no better words in which to greet the return of this day, than the words of Thomas as he met the risen Christ on that second Sunday morning: "My Lord and my God." And our Lord's response through all the centuries is new and fresh as the morning of spring time: "Thomas, because thou hast seen me, thou hast believed; blessed are they that have not seen, and yet believed."

And Sunday—there need be no objection to calling it Sunday. This very name itself came as a trophy and testimony, won by the cross and the resurrection power from heathenism, the noblest and brightest day in all their calendar of worship and far away longing—the forecast indeed of our Lord's final and universal conquest of all the empires of darkness. And Sunday finds its new and fullest meaning, its crown of glory in being emphasized as *the day* in which the church assembles for worship, and has its preaching service, and its teaching service in commemoration of its Lord's resurrection. Would that this exalted notion of the day and of its glorious service could once get full sway over the hearts of the people! It would master them, making them strong and joyous in the kingdom of the Lord, and would bring fresh honor to his name, and mightily augment the power of the church for the conquest of the world.

Preaching is not worship, listening to sermons is not worship, but they contribute in marvelous fashion to the noblest and loftiest worship. A thousand hearts—thousands of thousands, will bear testimony to this. Right preaching—the man of God, the man sent of God and bearing God's message to the people—is the most dynamic power in the world. And when the Lord opens the heart of those who hear that they attend to the things spoken, then heaven and

earth are in conjunction. Preaching is the first and highest on the list of things which men can do for God. The preacher is Christ's Ambassador, and in Christ's stead pleads with men for God, as indeed through Christ he pleads with God for men. "After that in the wisdom of God, the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe." And the preacher, endued with power from on high, in his great message and in the rapture of his heart may lead his people to the very portals of the heavenly, and awaken in them songs like the angels sing. Then the preaching service becomes a season of worship devout and rapturous, and refreshing for the days to follow.

And the Sunday school, moreover, as the teaching service of the church, is becoming more and more a distinct and powerful factor in church life. As an institution it is a church school, when in operation a church service. Under our Lord's great commission as the Christian's program, the church must be evangelistic and missionary *but also didactic*—teaching observance of all things which he hath commanded. The Sunday school as a service for teaching the word of God, is putting new emphasis upon the teaching function of the church, and day by day is adding new power with the members for bringing in the kingdom. The church is coming to its own in this matter



of teaching the word of God, and teaching also the observance of his commandments—and that, too, without priest or prelate, but by the blessed leadership of preacher and pastor. There is no need to talk of changing the name. Let it be *Sunday* school for *Bible* study in *church* service, for having the membership better trained, made more efficient and more true in their church life.

#### THE BEAUTY OF CEREMONIAL SERVICES.

We must mention in this connection the ceremonial services of the church, as deserving special emphasis, namely, the administration of Baptism and the Lord's Supper as ordinances of the Lord's house. The one reproduces in a manner the scene at the Jordan when John baptized our Lord, and shows with realistic power the empty sepulchre in the garden, that people may see afresh the place where the Lord lay and get anew the inspiration of his resurrection from the dead. The other brings Calvary and the cross into the service; and with such vividness as to awaken all the pathos, love and devotion of the believer's heart. As often as repeated the Lord's Supper shows the Lord's death on the cross—the love of God for lost men, the gift of his Son as their atonement and redemption from sin, the exalted relation and glorious privilege of the believers in him—as if he would have his church live always

in sight of the cross, lest it forget and lose hope and heart for its mighty mission in the world.

And what shall we say for Baptism, that beautiful ceremony, so full of meaning in its double picture of burial because of death, and of resurrection because of life in Christ Jesus? Both ordinances are witnesses, and both are on the witness stand before the world for God and for Christ. Their testimony is practically the same, the one supplementing and strengthening the other. But oh, the baptismal scene, how many times and with rapturous power has it stirred the hearts of God's people when gathered for worship in this ceremonial service! It matters not whether they assemble on the banks of a beautiful stream like the Jordan, or around the pool in either the open field or shady grove, or before a baptistry built on purpose in the house of worship as an open sepulchre in the house of God, the meaning is always the same. Its beauty and the power of its message come home to the heart of all who will hear, as the believer in Christ is buried with him in baptism, and is raised up again with him to walk in the new life.

But what does baptism say for God in this ceremonial service? This question of rich and momentous import, has been overshadowed by the question of what the ordinance may do for one who is baptized. We have been so much concerned about what baptism does for man that

we have almost lost sight of the larger question and failed to hear its voice for God. Surely it speaks for him as did the cloud in the temple when the house of the Lord was filled with the glory of the Lord. God appeared to Moses and made himself known in the burning bush; God appeared at the Jordan and made himself known through the opening heaven in that audible approval of the baptism of his Son. So in this ordinance or ceremony which he himself has set in his church for glorious purpose, he reveals himself, speaks his word and in symbol makes known his work of grace in saving men.

Imagine yourself in a baptismal service. The man going down into the water as the Ethiopian did, and coming up out of the water as Jesus did at the Jordan, is a believer. He has made public profession of his faith in Christ as his Savior, is here obeying his Lord's commandments and following his Lord's example, is buried in baptism and is risen again with Christ to walk in newness of life. Mark the simplicity of the act, witness the significance of the form, see the burial and resurrection—and listen for the voice of God.

In thy name, O Lord, assembling,  
 We, thy people, now draw near.  
 Teach us to rejoice with trembling,  
 Speak and let thy servant hear—  
 Hear with meekness,  
 Hear with godly fear.

The voice of God at the Jordan finds its counterpart somewhat in the baptism of every believer. God is present in this ceremony as the cloud was the symbol of his majesty and presence in the temple worship of the Jews. In the burning bush God's presence was manifest, and he announced the unity of his Being—I AM THAT I AM. Baptism goes further in the revelations of his grace—says for God that he is present in this ceremonial service as in the scene at Horeb and the Jordan; declares for God the Trinity of his Being—Father, Son and Holy Spirit; says for God that he gave his Son to die as an atonement for sin, and sent the Holy Spirit to make his work effective in the hearts of men; declares for God the believers' adoption into the divine family as his son through faith in Jesus Christ—saying *this* is my son in whom I am well pleased; and in a figure of marvelous beauty and force, baptism declares for God a *threefold resurrection* as the product of his power—the resurrection of Jesus from Joseph's new tomb, the spiritual resurrection wrought in the believer's heart by the Spirit of God when he raised him up with Christ, and the final resurrection of the dead when at the last day the trumpet will sound and all that are in their graves shall come forth. These are the things, at least some of the wonderful things which baptism says for God. The glory of heaven is upon this ceremony, while

again and again with its every return, God's voice is heard as through the open heaven with the same message of his grace. This is in part at least a sublime meaning of this ceremonial service of the church, and should subdue our hearts as we look on and listen.

This service, so simple yet so august and glorious in meaning, holds the devout attention of all who fear God and keep his commandments. It appeals to our hearts with pathos and power. It is the witness on the witness stand for God, and for Christ in all that he did for human redemption. The service is full of the things concerning God, and voices what he is ever saying to a lost world, and has in it the flavor of heaven. The followers of Christ in times past have died for this ceremony in their devotion to him, and sealed their vows with the blood of martyrs, to keep this ordinance sacred and true. It is worth dying for, and worth living for, too; it makes death heroic and honorable, it calls for the cleanest, noblest living, and makes life beautiful in its testimonies of love and loyalty.

Our bearing in this ceremonial service may be the test of the real heart condition toward God, toward Christ, toward his church and his commandments. One may of course make much ado about baptism—ready to fight for it, ready to burn others at the stake for it, possibly even ready himself to die for it—and yet lack the lofty con-

ception as to its spirit and meaning, even be without the heart condition which baptism requires, and without the character and life which baptism professes. This is a fearful incongruity, and yet possible, and full of danger and warning. But on the other hand, in this ceremonial service there may be the noblest exhibition of allegiance and loyalty. It calls for right spirit and form and purpose in the keeping of the ordinance. It calls for great earnestness and seriousness in its observance, and in what we ourselves do concerning it. We need, like Moses, to pause before this baptismal scene, "put off our shoes from off our feet," uncover in its august presence, and listen to what is said for God in this ordinance of his house.

#### THE FULFILLMENT OF ITS HIGH MISSION.

The church with its enduement and equipment is commissioned to high service. And in the assembly of the saints and in its public service the church finds largely the fulfillment of its mission. In every one of these gatherings for worship, there is the emphasis severally and distinctively of the unity, equipment and enduement, the function, mission and fruitage of the church. These services make for its edification as a body, and for the edification also of its members in their individual church life. The church is self-edifying, builds from within, as the human body or

the oak tree builds from within. Its equipment and enduement, as well as all its public services are for this very purpose, and "maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love." These things all work together in beautiful harmony and glorious purpose, "for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ, till we all come in unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ."

Outside of the church, also, and as augmenting its power for good, these services are of surpassing worth to a community and thence to the world at large. No one can estimate the worth and far-reaching power of Sunday in the nation's life, with its public services in thousands of churches throughout the length and breadth of the land. They are the salt of the earth, and the salt also in the nation's life—its salvation, if its salvation shall ever come. They are for the glory of God, too, in the world, and for the advancement of his kingdom among men; they were for the honor and glory of Christ in showing what the gospel can do in its power to save through the riches of grace in him. In these services, moreover, there is the communion of saints. Here they sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus. And in this blessed fellowship

and common experience of grace they get fore-taste of what shall be hereafter :

The hill of Zion yields  
A thousand sacred sweets,  
Before we reach the heav'nly fields,  
Or walk the golden streets.

Then let our songs abound,  
And every tear be dry;  
We're marching through Immanuel's ground,  
To fairer worlds on high.

Come, we that love the Lord,  
And let our joys be known,  
Join in a song with sweet accord,  
And thus surround the throne.

The church here is promise for the consummation of the church hereafter; the assembly here for the assembly hereafter; the church militant for the Church triumphant; the services here for the services hereafter—when we shall “come unto Mount Zion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels, to the general assembly and church of the first-born whose names are written in heaven,” where congregations ne'er break up and Sabbaths have no end.



## CHAPTER XI.

### YOUR MEMBERSHIP IN THE CHURCH.

HOW is it that *you* are a member of the church? And how about *your* church life, in its relation to the cause of Christ, and to your position and influence in the community? These are personal questions of much moment, to be laid on the individual heart, to be confronted and answered by each one for himself. And yet your answer greatly concerns others, because you do not stand alone, and no man liveth or dieth unto himself. Your membership in the church came by your own choice, and by your individual, voluntary act; but it came also by the welcome consent and vote of others, who were already members, and established for you new relations with new privileges and obligations.

None but Christians should unite with the church—only those who are Christians professedly and at heart. Being in the church, therefore, presupposes that one is a Christian; that he has accepted Christ as his Saviour, committed himself to Christ as his Lord, has appeared before others somewhere in a public profession of faith and told of the work of grace in his heart. This marks in a formal way your connection with *the*

*church of Christ*, and shows outwardly and visibly your place in his kingdom. It is the outward expression among men of the kingdom of God in your heart. If, therefore, the outward be true to the inward, you have already come to a position of honor and eminent distinction.

Becoming a Christian is a new birth, a birth into the family and kingdom of God through the Spirit of God. This, however, though momentous and of infinite worth, is not a finished condition—a commencement, indeed, but not consummation. In its very nature and purpose the new heart contemplates and requires church connection, and has the promise of church life. If these do not follow the profession of conversion as opportunity may allow, there is something incongruous and wrong—some failure through want of right instructions, or some shortage in the conversion and the profession of faith.

It is in the heart of the newly saved and of his very nature—the cry of the child for the mother's care is not more natural—to seek consort with the people of God and companionship among the followers of Christ as they associate themselves in the church and in church life. On the one hand grapes in the market presuppose the vine and vineyard, but on the other hand, the vine and the vineyard have in them the potency and promise of life and leaf, of foliage and fruitage. The fountain demands outlet in

the stream, and greater fullness in the fountain gives also greater fullness in the outflow. Church membership is the fruitage of the Christian life, the outflow of the new heart, the response to the call from within, as baptism is the answer of a good conscience toward God. The grace of God in the heart must have its outlet in church life, in forms of public profession of Christ, in the loyalty of keeping his commandments, and in the noble purpose of living to his honor and of magnifying his saving grace.

#### SETTING A HIGH STANDARD.

The purpose of this chapter is to apply these great fundamental principles to the individual; and to emphasize the individual character and worth of membership in the church, and the individual activity and energy in church life. It is a personal matter throughout, though the one be associated with the many. It involves tremendous issues which you must settle for yourself. If you are not a Christian you should not be in the church, but if you are, then you will not stay out of the church nor stay away from the church. Contentment out of church connection is inconsistent with the grace of God in the heart, and will surely discredit all your professions, however sincere they may be. This must be so, otherwise we would question our Lord's wisdom in his provision of the church, and challenge his

call to follow him and keep his comandmnets. The outward in Christian living must match the inward of Christian experience. This gives emphasis to the worth of church membership for the individual, and demands a church life commensurate with the new and exalted relation.

Having become a member, you have been admitted to all church privileges. You have been baptized upon a profession of your faith, as your Lord was baptized before the bgeinning of his public ministry; you have come to the Lord's table with his people, and in symbol of your union with him and of your life in him you have partaken of the sacred emblems in this holy service. This is unspeakable honor, and puts a line of demarcation between you and the outside world, as surely as the crown and royal robe separate between the king and the people. It calls for the best possible life—a life becoming the gospel of Christ. One may be a better church member than he is a Christian, but his best attainment as a Christian will find noblest and most complete expression in his church life. For in this he is not only serving God, but serving on God's plan and fulfilling his call and purpose.

This requires the highest and best that is in you, with something always above and beyond. Surely every member should make the best member possible for himself, and should have it as the mastering ambition of his heart to give, both to

the church and to the world, the best church life. Why be satisfied with the good, if the better is in possible reach? Why be satisfied with the better, when you may reach that which is best? "I count not myself to have apprehended," wrote a great master in Christian living, "but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth to those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus." Here is a life with the individual personal element which masters all else, and sweeps everything before it like a cyclone in the forest.

This is setting a high standard for ourselves, and puts before the church member of today an example before which the best might well stand abashed. And yet this man in his example and life is worth our study, if only we may discover the source of his power and the mainspring of his action. We come at once in our inquiry upon his experience of grace, his doctrinal life in its mighty force and energy, his ever-abiding sense and conviction of being saved and called of God to save others, his overmastering, all absorbing purpose to honor Christ and have Christ glorified in himself—these were the elements that made his life great, with Christ as the all and in all.

He was *Christ centered* and therein was the mighty source of his power. The love of Christ constraineth me—he wrote; neither count I my

life dear unto myself, so that I might finish my course with joy; yea doubtless, I count all things but loss, for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord; with all boldness Christ shall be magnified in my body whether by life or by death, according to my earnest expectation and hope. So he wrote and uncovered the mainspring of his choice and championship. He had met Christ in the way to Damascus, and surrendered all to him—his heart with its motive, will and mighty impulse, his intellect with old belief passing away and new belief coming in with power, his purpose in life when all the high ambitions became set for the coronation of the new-found Lord. Such was his surrender, and Saul of Tarsus came out of that experience with a view of the Lordship of Jesus of Nazareth, that never once in all after life did he get from under its spell and power. It breaks out again and again in his writing and oftentimes becomes a rapturous song—the Lord Jesus, and Jesus the Lord, and Christ Jesus the Lord, until the end came. And then in realization of his hopes he finished his course with joy, and received his crown of righteousness from the Lord the righteous Judge.

#### EXPRESSING EXPERIENCE AND BELIEF.

In the case of Paul, also, you have a new view of *doctrine* as to its essential value and practical

worth, and you may readily discover at least the possible place and power of doctrine in your own church life. His doctrinal power was unsurpassed by any other element in his character in determining his conduct or in the settlement of great questions. His doctrinal convictions were his creed—melted and moulded in his own heart experience, and his creed was largely the making of his character, and was in his teaching and conduct like the granite and iron in a great structure. Take heed to your doctrines, was his earnest admonition; take heed unto yourselves that you “may adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour in all things;” hold fast the form of sound forms, and let no man take your crown. And this is but another form for the Master’s great word: let your light so shine before men that they may see your good works—the beauty and power of your doctrine as shown in your life, and glorify your Father which is in heaven.

The church life of a person should be at once the embodiment and adornment of his church doctrine; and his membership in the church, in the fullness and richness of its meaning, is the expression not only of the experience of grace, as we have said, but also of his doctrinal character and life. His church convictions tell, or should tell, what he believes, while his church life shows the manner of his believing and the power of his doctrine in his own conduct. Christian life



means a creed, more or less comprehensive, but clear and powerful. The necessity and demand are very urgent that your church life should be the expression of your church creed. Especially is this true in this present time of so much looseness and indefiniteness of faith. If one is a Methodist, then let him be a Methodist in the doctrine which he advocates, if a Presbyterian, then let him be true to his Presbyterian creed—by all means let his life be in keeping with the doctrines of his heart, then people will know where to place him. A Baptist in heart and belief is honor bound to be only a Baptist in his church connection and church life, otherwise he is untrue to himself and to his own convictions. It becomes him to adorn the doctrine in all things, and to show its beauty as the doctrine of God.

Sincerity and faithfulness in doctrine are basal in Christian character and find their exemplification in church life. And in the very necessity of the case neither church life nor church character can come to its best, except there be a doctrinal basis. If you shall ever come to the highest life, there must be the doctrinal character with the doctrinal conduct, and the doctrinal conviction with the doctrinal conquest. There is nothing higher for us in this particular than to adorn the doctrine of God in Christ Jesus. It makes us strong and we can make it beautiful before the world. And yet men have decried



doctrine, have talked much against it, have even said there was no difference in doctrine, no difference in churches; and that one doctrine is as good as another, and that it makes no difference "what we believe, or what church we join, so the heart is right."

But those who say this fall much short of the great apostle; he was a powerful and vigorous contradiction to all this, both in his teaching and in his manner of life before men. How he did *adorn* the doctrine, but not until the doctrine, through the Spirit of God, had transformed and glorified his character. The great doctrines as he believed them, and experienced them in his heart, were the granite in his character and the iron in his blood. His faith and creed were experiential. They burned in his life like the bush at Horeb on which the glory of the Lord had fallen, and in which God appeared and made himself known. Paul was what he was, largely because of his doctrine—a living system of truth—Systematic Theology vitalized and aglow in the richest experience and profoundest convictions. This made his life glorious for the King, finished his course with joy, and won him the prize of the crown.

#### A PERSONAL ASSET WITH INDIVIDUAL POWER.

Returning to your membership in the church—how does it compare when measured by these high considerations, and by your own possibili-

ties? What is your membership worth as an asset in your character, and as a force in directing your conduct among men? And your church life, how does it stand as to its influence on others for the cause of Christ, and what are you doing for its cultivation and enrichment? These questions are not asked as being adverse, or for your discouragement. But they deserve your attention and may lead on to high and nobler things, for with the best members there is yet something for richer attainment, and in the best church life there are possibilities for yet larger things and better living in the kingdom and service of our Lord.

Paul first gave himself to Christ, in all that he was and in all that he could do. This was the secret spring of his life, and points out to us the line of our possibilities. It is with you to do what he did—*first give yourself to Christ*, make your life render its full measure to his service for his honor and glory. This is something more, and far more important than the giving of money. Withholding this, you can give him nothing; but with this being given him all else will follow. The purpose to make Christ first in all things is a practical possibility, and interferes with none of the right affairs of life. It rather ennobles and enriches the life in every direction; the giving of a cup of water—if given in his name and in consideration of him—at once becomes an act

which angels might do. The self-centered man is the opposite of all that is best in Christian life; the Christ-centered man, with Christ enthroned in his heart and crowned in his life, is everywhere for Christ, lives under the banner of the King, and leaves no question as to his attitude in the great cause of God.

With this fixed as a principle in the heart, then the settlement of other and minor matters comes easily as a matter of course—as the solid block of ice would melt and disappear under the blaze of the summer sun. Christ himself is the settlement of most questions, and is himself the answer of many problems in life. The purpose to glorify Christ is far better than attempts to imitate Christ. The one is outward and may be mechanical, the other is inward and of the heart, and works as an engine of power both for impelling and for direction.

Take two social matters, for example, and view them alongside this principle, and in relation to your church membership and church life. A young man, who was a professing Christian and worthy in many ways, came to me as his pastor with the question whether I thought there was any harm in dancing. This is a frequent question and tries the conscience of many young people who are members in the church. In answer to my question as to why he wanted my opinion and whether that would decide his own

course, he replied that he could not say as to that. But my final word with him, speaking as his pastor and from a desire to serve him and lead him on to better things for God, I said about this, calling him by name: "I will give you the privilege, so far as I have the right to give you the privilege, to dance as much and whenever you please, on only one condition." He caught at this, and awaited the condition, viz.: 'you first make out of yourself *the best Christian and the best church member possible to you*, and then you may dance all you please." His countenance changed, and his eyes dropped, as he responded, "But, then, I would not want to dance." Precisely so, and that settles the whole issue; it is a choice between one of two courses.

The other matter is even more serious, and yet can find settlement by the same general principle of putting Christ first, and making the church life mean something in the social life. In the cities, and more or less in the village seeking to imitate the city, the young church members and all have changed Sunday evening into a social service for the parlor and made it a set time for calling. Some have gone even further, and made it the occasion for the social function in the community. The last is thoroughly ungodly, robbing God of his day, and borders close on to the vicious in its general and hurtful influence upon character and life. And even the

first comes from low views of church obligation, or want of concern for church life—a lack more or less of loyalty to Christ, and of genuine concern for his honor and as to how he is represented by their conduct in the social circle. This is where the test comes, and many who would be true to him as martyrs, fail utterly in these open hours of pleasure.

To live for Christ is sometimes more severe and more trying than to die for him. Herein are severe perils for your membership in the church and for your church life. Why not be a social power for Christ? Why not bring on his coronation in the social realm? Is there any greater glory for the parlor than its dedication to Christ in all of its mighty influence in home life and business life? *The parlor for Christ*, is a noble motto to which the best may well set their best abilities and energies. So in every other department of the home and in the business world. Why be a master of finance in the markets, and practically worthless in the management of your church finances and in directing things for the glory of Christ? If church membership is worth anything, its worth must hold good everywhere; if church life is a beauty and power at all, it must be seen and felt in the whole range of conduct and association. One of the greatest needs of the church of Christ today, is that the business sense of the men and the social

power of the women, shall be consecrated and centralized in his service. These two things, combined in any community, would command and control for his honor, and set everything on a higher and nobler plane.

#### AN OPEN DOOR FOR USEFULNESS.

This opens exceptional and increased opportunities in church life that are almost immeasurable in far-reaching power for God. The one, by his association with the many, becomes mighty in the many. One strand does not make a cable, but the cable is made up of single strands wrought into one. Church membership is associated units, each of which has in it an element of divine power; church life has in it the power and advantage of association. It is a combination of many wrought into one by the Spirit of God, to serve God on God's plan for the making of his kingdom among men.

It is a great moment in the life when one unites with the church, and takes his place among the people of God as one of them, and yet back of that is the greater event, the supreme moment in the soul when God touches the heart, opening up its hidden sources, and faith emerges, and the light of the knowledge of the glory of God shines in. Old things have passed away; all things become new; and the man himself is a new creature in Christ Jesus, and Christ is in him the

fullness of grace and the hope of glory. It is an experience one never forgets, and the results of whose coming shall outlast the stars, growing brighter and brighter unto the perfect day. This is the beginning of his church life, which will become richer and more fruitful with the passing years.

Somehow—if one may tell in print his own simple story—I am writing now with a boy in mind, into whose heart God came, and in the recollection of the blessed day when grace began its work. It was with the Cane Run Baptist Church in Kentucky—if the reader will pardon the putting of its name on record. A meeting was in progress, the sermon had been preached, full of pathos and moving power, the people were singing—

Amazing grace! how sweet the sound,  
That saved a wretch like me!  
I once was lost, but now I'm found,  
Was blind, but now I see.

With the opening of the second stanza the boy started for the front, to offer for membership, and to ask for a place among the followers of our Lord. What a time it was, and how it all comes back to him now as he writes and the tears run down. Blessed people they were, and many of their kindly words spoken that night linger with me to this day.



A few years later, and my father changed his pastorate to the New Liberty Baptist Church in Owen County, of the same State. In this church, and as the result of a meeting of refreshing power and great ingathering, there came a fresh awakening with a larger and more intense spiritual life, which became more definite and more insistent in seeking to honor the Lord. It seemed to me then, and seems to me now, after the years have passed, that God went beyond himself—if one may dare to say so—in a further work of grace, and in condescending love, and in an unusual display of his providence which led the young man out into the open and set him to his life's work. Among these people and in this church came the sense, so new and startling, yet so clear and irresistible, that God would have him preach. It seems strange even to this day, but so it was; he called, and I followed on; he touched me and I ventured on the task. And in great kindness and forbearance these people voted in church meeting, so some of them told me, to give their consent for "the young brother to exercise his liberty of exhortation," and so it came to pass. These people, too, like the others, live with me in grateful remembrance.

And now, with the boldness that may be unseemly, but as a token of love fresh and strong for these two churches, I have ventured to put in public the pictures of their two houses of worship. They make the frontispiece of this book, and rank



side by side as they live in my memory. Most of those who took part in those scenes have passed away, with only one here and there remaining; but their houses of worship appear about as they did then—well kept and improved within. They, of course, will be of no great interest to others, but what a place they do hold with me, and are more beautiful far than more stately buildings; what a glory gathers about them because of their service in the past as houses in which churches of Christ have their homes and places of worship. How gladly I would do them honor if such a thing were possible!

The first of the two, midway between Georgetown and Lexington, never loses its beauty or fails of its charm for my eyes when I go that way, whether by rail or along the public highway—standing over to the left off in the distance, just over the hill, and its plain shingle roof in full view among the treetops. There my Christian life began in the experience of grace which God wrought; there, too, it first found expression in church life which gave me place among the people of God.

There is nothing exceptional in this, only that this is mine, and yours is yours. This is written here simply because the heart is allowed the freedom to say what it wanted to say. Doubtless it will awaken the memory in other hearts—if readers shall come this far into the book—and carry

the reader to that distinguished moment when he found the Lord gracious in the forgiveness of sin. Meanwhile the two houses of worship—the one a country church, the other a church in a small village—may bear their silent testimony for the people who lived and wrought and worshipped there in other years. And there, within those sacred walls, the two churches still have their homes, and worship, serving God in their day and generation much as their predecessors did in the time gone by—doing honor to Christ in maintaining the worship and faith of their fathers. People come and go, but the song is unbroken, the chord and sentiment remain unchanged among the people of God: “The Lord is my strength and song, and he is become my salvation; he is my God, and I will prepare him an habitation; my father’s God, and I will exalt him.”

## CHAPTER XII.

### THE CHURCH OF YOUR MEMBERSHIP.

**T**HIS chapter, like the last, is individual and personal in subject and treatment. It deals with a specific church in the aggregate of its membership, rather than the individual member. There it was *you* and your church, but here *your church* and you—the church of which you are a member. It is more to you than any other, than all others, and your membership should be kept alive, active, and growing. Much depends on you as to what the church is and much depends on the church as to what you are in character and life. There is here powerful reflex action one on the other—far more than is generally supposed.

A specific church, like a person, or school, or business house, has its individual character and reputation—character being what it really is within itself, reputation what it is reputed to be among those on the outside. And these, of course, vary in different churches, as the churches themselves vary, and often in marked way, in the aggregate of its membership and in its conduct as a body. This is true even of “The Church” in its several forms or “branches” as they appear among us today; they are but historical remnants of

“The Church” in its first departure and mongrel growth from the church of Christ, which was local and individual at the first according to his appointment. But we are speaking here of local churches, some of which are better than others when measured even by proper standards—some Baptist churches, I mean, are better than other Baptist churches.

This was true of the churches in the New Testament period, and is manifest from comparative study of their several records—just as some men are better than other men, some Christians better than other Christians. “We have this treasure in earthen vessels,” and the treasure is always the same, but its manifestations vary—shining now with more light, and now with less. It follows, therefore, that your church is largely what you make it, in a threefold way—in its character, in its reputation, and in the fulfillment of its mission. Its character is a composite character, and its life a composite life, made up of the aggregate character and life of its members. The community will read you and your life, and from them will make up its judgment as to the church of your membership.

This magnifies both church and member; it places responsibility on the member in what he shall do for the church, and responsibility even more pressing possibly on the church as to what it shall do in training its members in character, in

doctrine, and in service. A church is known by its fruit, as much so as a fig tree or fir tree—as much so as the saloon, if the opposite poles of the earth may be set in comparison. Its fruit consists of what it does in the making of homes, in the making of character, in the blessing of the community, in fulfilling the function and mission of a church of Jesus Christ. It is a severe test, but after all it is the test of a standing or falling church.

#### THE STANDARD OF MEASUREMENT.

Some people, of course, have very inadequate and even improper ideas in judging as to either what a church is or should be. Their praise may be no compliment for the church, while their censure and adverse judgment may be for its praise and honor. So there is need for a standard of judgment—a standard both for yourself and others in judging your church. To this end we will name here for study and comparison the specific case of a New Testament church—the church at Ephesus, together with individual connection and responsibility in its life and work. Read these scriptures as if they were fresh from the pen of their author, and were written to you and to the church of which you are a member.

Take heed unto thyself, and unto the doctrine; continue in them; for in doing this thou shalt both save thyself and them that hear thee.

Take heed therefore unto yourselves and unto all the flock over which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood.

These things write I unto you, . . . that thou mayest know how thou oughtest to behave thyself in the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth.

I am Alpha and Omega, the first and the last, and what thou seest write in a book, and send it unto the seven churches. . . . He that hath an ear let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches.

These are commanding and even august words. They have the stamp and authority of him who liveth and was dead, who holdeth the seven stars in his right hand, and walketh in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks. There is no reason why these words of scripture should not apply to you and to the church of your membership. They are full of meaning and responsibility for members in their relation to the church, and for the church in its relation to the members both as individuals and in the aggregate of its membership. Transferring the emphasis from Ephesus to a specific church of today like the one in which you hold membership, we may follow these words as guide and standard to determine what that

church should be in its modern environment and with its modern problems.

(1) In relation to its officers and members, to its organic government and the administration of its affairs. This is simple but basal to all else. Take heed to thyself; take heed to yourselves; the many are wrought into one, while each retains his individual person and place; all on the same basis, all dealt with in a uniform way; all equal and co-equal with one another, with behavior becoming those who have in hand the management of the affairs in the house of God; and all, too, under the Holy Spirit who dwells within the church as a body, renewing and guiding, endowing and enriching; the simplest of all organizations and yet the most effective, choosing its own officers and directing its own officials, whether pastor or deacon, and seeking always the honor and glory of its one sovereign head, in loyalty and devotion to the Lord Jesus Christ.

(2) In relation to God. The church of God, which he purchased with his own blood in the person of his Son when dying on the cross; the church of the living God—the organic body in which the Spirit of God is active and powerful; the house of God—the inward and invisible, find expression here in the outward and visible; the house standing for the body that worships within; and the body of believers standing for the unseen kingdom—the simplest expression of the might-

iest and most glorious reality. This is the basal element in church character, the universal and supreme standard for its testing and measurement.

(3) Its relation to doctrine. What it believes and teaches—the pillar and ground of the truth. The truth equals the truth as it is in Jesus—the doctrines of the gospel. The church is made custodian of the gospel, and is entrusted with giving its facts to the world with what these facts mean in the way of doctrine. The falling apple, for illustration, was fact in nature, but the mighty law of gravitation was its truth—the meaning of the falling—in the system of the universe; the death of Jesus was fact in history, but its meaning or doctrine is the atonement which came by blood. The church holds within itself as its entrustment the purchase price both of its own making and of human redemption. The church of which you are a member, like the church of the New Testament, stands for doctrine—the doctrines of the New Testament—the doctrines of the grace of God. It makes a tremendous difference as to the doctrine which a church holds and gives out to the world. Take heed unto thy doctrine.

(4) The relation which the church holds to the community—to government, whether city or national. This, too, is of great importance. It shows what a church is, and opens the way for



the fulfillment of its mission. The church—your church through its members and its aggregate membership as a body—must never fail of this. It is the light of the world, the salt of the earth, a blessing always to municipality and commonwealth—saving the nation by saving men.

This outline as a brief unfolding of the scriptures quoted above, represents in a moderate way what the church was in the city of Ephesus—a church complete and independent, operating its own affairs within itself, standing for God, for Christ, and for the doctrines of the gospel. It shows the character of that church and the elements of its power, together with the lines of its activity and operation. Quietly but powerfully it wrought, with its influence permeating the city life and undermining the mighty reign of gods and goddesses, until the business of making idols was gone, or about going, and the great traffic itself was brought into disrepute, and even the great goddess Diana was about to lose her prestige. It was a struggle between church and temple, with the gospel coming into the ascendency.

This serves as a standard as to what should be the church of today, the church of which you are a member, and points out clearly what must be the elements in which there should be the training and care of its membership. If the church is to have a membership of power it

must come through training; and this training is the business of the church itself, each church training its own members, and cannot be entrusted to another—though in many ways help may be called in from the outside from those of like spirit and purpose. This is basal and imperative, essential alike to the highest attainment in church character, and to the fulfillment of the lofty task to which it is called in the world. God has wonderfully endowed and equipped the church to this very end, as the human body that converts bread and meat into bone and muscle, or the great oak whose every leaf is a lung and whose roots draw up nourishment from the great depths of the earth, and yet for itself builds within, making fibre and bark, growing in stature and strength. It is with the church to make of itself a glorious structure for the King, a fit temple for his indwelling.

#### A CONVERTED MEMBERSHIP NECESSARY.

The church, in order to the training of its members, must maintain the principle and policy of a converted membership—receiving as members only those who have made public profession of faith in Christ as their personal Saviour. For only those who have an experience of grace can be cultivated in the fruit of the Spirit; only those with a Christian experience can be trained in Christian character and in the

richness of Christian service. This is fundamental and as fixed as any law in the physical world. Things are trained and grow along the line of their nature, and bear fruit after their kind. Only the new heart can be trained in the line and fruit-bearing of the new heart.

Church culture is a term just now coming into use among us, and stands for real need and promises large possibilities. Why not this for renewed hearts, as well as culture of the field, or the culture of the flower garden in beauty and richness, or the growing of the vineyard, or the training of the vine to fullness of fruit bearing? There are certain fundamental laws which are common in both spheres and which will yield as much in the church as in the field. Church culture is in a sense self-culture. The training of its members is largely self-training, as has been said; the church sets itself to the training of its members, to the strengthening and enriching of its membership in the aggregate. But there must first be the Christian, else there can be no Christian culture, and there can be no coming to the full stature of manhood in Christ Jesus, with the individual until there first be the birth of the Spirit, or with the church unless there first be the membership of those whose hearts are renewed in the regenerating grace of God's Spirit. Men can be grown only from children; "you cannot gather grapes of thorns; or figs of thistles;" the

Christian character and life come only with the Christian; and church culture and training require the regenerated membership, as God has emphasized in many ways.

In training its membership, whether as individuals or in the aggregate, the church needs for itself at least a three-fold emphasis and a three-fold culture, viz., in character, doctrine and service. These three are closely related and largely interdependent. Taken together they make the member what he should be in his church life; and taken together again in the aggregate membership, they make the church what it should be in spiritual life, doctrinal character, and in its active ministries—cultured in Christ Jesus, trained for God in the line of his purpose and for the fulfillment of its mission in the world. Surely this is a great task, and lays upon the church itself tremendous responsibilities and opens to the future a large and glorious usefulness.

Church doctrine, the training in church doctrine, deserves and requires all possible emphasis, if it be the New Testament doctrine. The church is here for that very purpose; that in part at least is the essential business of the church, also its strength, and gives to the church definite meaning and teaching power. All that was said in the preceding chapter concerning doctrine in relation to the individual, should be said with increased emphasis for doctrines—the doctrines

of the gospel—in relation to the church as a body, and in the training of its membership. What the church stands for in doctrine is the test of its character, a measurement of its worth as a mouthpiece for God, and in bearing witness for his grace in Christ Jesus. A church which stands for “nothing in particular,” as with an individual, has nothing in particular to stand for, is without doctrinal character among men, and has no mission in the world. It is like the chaff before the wind or floating trash on the sea.

The church of which you are a member necessarily finds its essential self in its doctrinal character, for here you come upon its very life and heart and power. As with the one member so with the church in the aggregate of members—and even more powerfully—the doctrine is the metal in the blood, the iron and granite in the great structure. What is it that makes the red rose red as it blooms in your garden? What is it that gives the dogfennel the odor of that weed in the field? It is that indescribable something which by strange process enters into the very life, flows through their very veins, and shows in stalk and fibre, in color and fragrance, making one flower to differ from another flower in both field and garden. So it is with doctrine in the church of Christ, gives it doctrinal character, gives it a color and beauty all its own, enriches

its flavor and fragrance, and gives it inner strength and withstanding power—in the one case like the rose in the garden, in the other like the giant oak in the forest. Doctrinal character means doctrinal power, and where there is doctrinal power in the gospel of the grace of God, there is also efficiency in the building of his kingdom among men.

#### CHOOSING ITS AGENCIES FOR TRAINING.

It is with the church to choose its agencies and methods for training its membership. It has both privilege and obligation to organize its own forces within itself for greater efficiency in the kingdom of Christ. The question of method is optional, but the doing of the thing is imperative. Fields and flower gardens yield the best returns when best cultivated, and this again calls for the best implements and the best approved methods. There must be training in the church if the greatest and best attainments come; the church itself must train its members for God, and so momentous and important is the undertaking that the best members may well afford to give their best energies for devising the best methods—and even they themselves will reap largely from such efforts for general betterment.

The churches themselves have been very slow sometimes in making this provision for self-improvement and greater efficiency; sometimes not

even giving recognition or thought to the need, or possibilities, or obligation—failing to see their high mission or to hear God's call for the rising opportunity of a new hour. It is a sad fact that many of the great movements for the kingdom of Christ were begun and carried forward, not by churches as such, but by a few members of the church, who, working patiently and faithfully, came finally to enlist the church for its furtherance. Churches, like persons and nations, may fail to see their day, or hear when God is calling to new and larger things.

It was so with modern missions. Carey, though stirred within himself with the Spirit of God, could yet get no following, and even met with opposition in his purpose to evangelize the world—as if the church had any other business, or God any other plan for making known the gospel of his grace. It was so also with the Sunday school; within the easy memory of men still living churches voted to tolerate the new movement, and to allow some of the members to use the house of worship for such schools in the teaching of God's word. It is a fearful thought and fact that a church, the noblest of all organizations in its nature and purpose, may yet, like field and garden, go utterly to waste for failure to do what God intended should be done.

The same course has followed also, as a thing still not worked out among us, concerning Chris-



tian education, and the training of young people in our churches. But it is coming to pass with these movements as with the others; and yet still others will come in the forward movement of the kingdom of God. At the first a few members gave themselves to these objects, and finally churches, as such, were enlisted, and set heart and hand to make good the purpose of its being. Once when pastor I proposed a special work for the young people in the church, but the deacons deemed it not wise. I submitted, but said, very well, brethren, and now, leaving this method aside, what will you do or propose for the training of our membership? And that is the imperative question in the churches of today, and must be answered before God. Will the clock strike twelve and leave the question unanswered?

I am pleading with the church and for the church, the specific church of which you are a member and for which you are largely responsible. It is an effort to magnify the church in the mission which it was set and sent to do, to have it come to its own in privilege, power and blessing. The waste places will bloom as the garden of the Lord, and in fields now barren there will be the golden harvest, and the joyous song of the reapers as they gather in the sheaves. A golden day of serving and seed sowing in the church will surely bring a glad and golden day of gracious ingathering.



It is in mind and heart to mention here, with strong and specific emphasis, three agencies or methods which the church can use within itself and of itself, for the training of its membership in greater efficiency, viz., the Sunday school, the B. Y. P. U. and the Laymen's Movement. The first is older, of more general use and has come to its place of power; the second is slowly but surely coming into use, and showing itself well adapted as a church agency for church culture; while the Laymen's Movement is but starting with men as church members feeling themselves called of God to high purpose, showing their own membership worth while, and making their own church mighty for God in the world's redemption.

Sunday school and B. Y. P. U. training join in one purpose, as a joint church effort to make better members and a better church condition. In both the teaching function of the church is emphasized for the furtherance and fulfillment of the Christian's program; the one in teaching the word of God, the other for teaching church doctrine and training in church service, but both for the enrichment of the spiritual life of its members; both also aiming to make the members more efficient in their church life, more competent, active and true in the management of the affairs and in the care of "the house of God," which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth.

## THE PASTOR IN LEADERSHIP.

In the matter of church training, the pastor holds the place of leadership, as a place of honor and responsibility. In the organic life of the church as Christ established it in the world, this is his place by divine appointment. This is his office, with its two-fold function of preaching and teaching, of feeding and caring for the flock, "the church of God which he hath purchased with his own blood."

But specifically and with a particular church the pastor comes to his high office first by the choice and voluntary vote of the church, and second by his voluntary acceptance of the pastorate. It is a question of serious moment and must find settlement between him and the church—a solemn, sacred trust offered and accepted. It is not to be governed or guided or interfered with by anyone on the outside, whether Conference, or Bishop, or College of Bishops. It is the sovereign act of an independent church, seeking divine guidance, and choosing a pastor in the fear of God as leader in its service and efforts for the kingdom. It is a severe moment for a church, and they should seek such a pastor as will come to them as one sent of God and in the fullness of the blessing of the gospel of Christ.

But while a great honor, the highest honor indeed among men, this office in the church im-

poses a responsibility and care that might well make angels hesitate; and surely it should be accepted only in obedience to God's call. God chooses men for fields and fields for men, and the pastor comes to his office as the anointed of the Lord.

'Tis not a cause of small import,  
 The pastor's care demands;  
 But what might fill an angel's heart,  
 And filled a Saviour's hands.

Being intrusted with such a charge, the pastor comes to it called of God, not to lord it over God's heritage, but to serve in his strength for leadership in the church for larger things. His ministrations in the pulpit, his care for souls among his people, his organizing the force for better service, his training of the membership in character, doctrine and church life—these are the lines of his operation as he leads his people for the furtherance of the gospel and the building of the kingdom. The church in the exercise of its own choice has set him for its leader in teaching and training, and his leadership for God will be for him as a crown of glory.

Whatsoever a church sows, that shall the church also reap; this law so mighty and inevitable in the kingdom of nature, stands fast also in the kingdom of grace—alike for the one and for the many. Neglect, and indifference and failure in teaching and training will surely bring

forth fruit after its kind. Church culture, training in character, doctrine and service will give everlasting life in the church—in the church of your membership, with every increasing power for the fulfillment of its mission in the world. A better church membership will surely give a better church life to you and others; and this in turn will mean a fresh coronation for the King in Zion and more joy for his people.

## CHAPTER XIII.

### THE CHURCH AND THE COMMONWEALTH.

CHRISTIAN citizenship is possible in any form of human government, and is always for the highest common good. A Christian monarchy, even, with a Christian monarch who is godfearing and upright, would be the best possible monarchy; a Christian republic whose people fear the Lord and seek after righteousness, puts honor upon the individual and has its coronation for manhood. The followers of Christ have a message for every people, a mission with all nations, a commission to the whole world. And wherever they go, whether as individuals or in church organization and life, they are under this high mandate: "Render unto Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's, and unto God the things that are God's." His kingdom, he declares in the presence of all governments, is not of this world in origin, kind or character; and the church is to preach the gospel of his kingdom among all nations; and the kingdoms of this world shall become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ—not however "by might or by power," saith the Lord, but by his Spirit.

The commonwealth as a form of human government is a great and noble word. It means a state—a body politic consisting of men, united by contact and tacit agreement under one form of government and system of laws. The term applies to governments which are free and popular—for example, our federal commonwealth, or the several commonwealths of the republic—at least in theory. The word signifies *common well-being and happiness*, and marks a free people in the exercise of self-government and in seeking a common good—individual matching individual, and individuals wrought into one, uniting and seeking the highest direction of public affairs. Although largely ideal, this is yet the commonwealth, and worthy of our noblest ambition as a free people in a free republic.

In thought and discussion we must get back to fundamentals, whether in morals and government, or in religion and church life. We need to discriminate where things differ, to hold fast that which is good, to keep things in proper relation, to maintain the faithful working of principles, and always and everywhere to make imperative that which is right. There are axioms in morals as well as in mathematics, in religion as well as in right forms and rules of government. In his remarkable book, "The Axioms of Religion," President Mullins of the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary has set out with masterful

clearness and power six fundamental principles, as follows :

1. The theological axiom: The holy and loving God has a right to be sovereign.

2. The religious axiom: All souls have an equal right of direct access to God.

3. The ecclesiastical axiom: All believers have a right to equal privileges in the church.

4. The moral axiom: To be responsible man must be free.

5. The religio-civic axiom: A free church in a free state.

6. The social axiom: Love your neighbor as yourself.

A first truth is still a first truth, whether in the science of mathematics or politics, whether in the science of morals or religion, or in the organic system and life of Christianity. And first truth must always match and articulate with first truth. There can be no discord or disagreement in first principles. Let no one be afraid to hew to the line or follow in their working—only let him be sure that they are true and fundamental, for their ultimate end is the triumph of right among men, and of righteousness toward God. And righteousness never fails to exalt people.

#### THE PRINCIPLE IN OPERATION.

A Baptist church in a commonwealth is a free church in a free state. This is assertive of

the principle and policy of our people, but not intended to be restrictive or discriminative against others. It expresses the fundamental conception of religious liberty, the entire separation of "Church and State." This is the condition now prevalent in this republic, and throughout its several commonwealths. This principle and policy, indeed, are now so common, as a right in every home and in every heart, that the American citizen forgets its worth and the struggle it has caused. It came to our country and day as a distinct conquest from one of the fiercest conflicts of history—a conflict of inexpressible suffering, building martyrs' fires as occasion came, and making the pages of history red in the blood of the saints. We have religious liberty, therefore, as a priceless boon and heritage from our fathers. Men have died for it willingly, even joyously, and yet as martyrs. But today the church of Christ is free in a free commonwealth. Wherever the stars and stripes wave as the symbol of freedom and the flag of a free people, there men worship God according to the dictates of their own conscience, under their own vine and fig tree.

This is certainly the theory of our government, guaranteed both by the federal constitution and the constitution of its several states. It is the solemn duty of every American citizen to preserve this principle inviolate, with no infringe-



ment upon the policy, to give it a world-wide mission, and to transmit it to their children and to their children's children. The free church means the freedom of the people; any restriction of churches in their individual capacity or work, if not criminal, is restriction of the liberty of the people. The loss or abridgement of religious liberty is almost sure to be followed by abridgement and the final loss of civil liberty. No man, or set of men, whether "Church or State," have a right to *tolerate* in religion. Toleration is not freedom, and all men have a right to freedom—equally free, "a free church in a free state."

The very words in the combination, "Church and State," are much overworked in our modern literature. They are a misnomer, out of date, archaic, untrue, and should speedily become obsolete. They do not apply to our times or country, nor to our government, either federal, state or municipal. They do not apply to Baptists, nor to other denominations, not even to those who still hold something of "The Church" idea—for even they do not use the word in the old sense. In their original use, the state was the Roman Empire and The Church was the Roman Catholic Church. This is the genesis of the phrase and its genius, and it is difficult even now to get away from that first significance of the words. And yet "The Church," as the phrase was first used, and even as it is sometimes used now, though

in modified sense, has no place on American soil or in American institutions. Our condition of government and religion is a free church in a free state, the embodiment of a free people, and serving the interest of a free people for their highest good.

There is no such thing now as *Church and State*, as these words were first used and maintained for centuries, and are still maintained in some places. Such a thing in this country is incompatible and impossible. Our country is a country of freedom; but that whole system was a system of bondage and slavery, sometimes the most oppressive tyranny. It is contrary to the Federal Constitution, also to several, if not all, of the State Constitutions, contrary also to the genius of our free institutions. The "Church and State" idea is contrary to all the principles of the New Testament, to all the teaching of Christ and his apostles; and is impossible with those principles as interpreted by our Baptist people. It is in opposition to their idea of the local church in its own sovereign and independent character, its nature and mission. The basal idea of the New Testament which we insist upon is "A free church in a free state." They have great and common interest between them, but with no possible point of contact, and no point of necessary conflict. The New Testament way is the way of freedom, and should hold its place

among us as the best way, the highest ideal in all human government.

#### MORE JUST CONCEPTION.

As a substitute for the words, Church and State, I venture to offer the words at the heading of this chapter—the church and the commonwealth. They are truer words, nearer to the heart of things, and a better interpretation of church ministry, and of the noble fruitage which comes from right and righteousness in human government. The words themselves are better, while the conditions for which they stand are out of all comparison because of their own noble merit. American citizenship in its theory and practice is unique among the nations of the world. It may give the highest type of Christian citizenship, as it may also give the finest type of Christian civilization. And this is the product of a free church in the commonwealth; the seed has come to its fruitage and ripeness, without the curse or blight or restriction of “Church and State.” It is a wonderful thing to have gotten free—like Simon Peter brought out from chains and bondage, through the prison gates out into the open—and freedom is rich in the well-being and happiness of a great people.

The theory and ideal are well-nigh perfect, while its practical worth and working depends solely upon the character and conduct of our

people. And for this reason the welfare and even safety of the republic, is largely in the forces which make for good character in its citizens, and for good morals and right living in its citizenship. Self-government is inherent in freedom, but the practical worth and working of self-government, and even of freedom itself, depends on the character and conduct of the free. No man is really free except as he exercises his liberty in due regard for the rights of others. Individual rights have their abridgement, or rather their convergence and consequent enlargement, in the public weal—the largest good for the largest number. Government in its highest form and practical worth, is at last government “of the people, by the people, and for the people.” And the highest ideal in American citizenship will come from the “enlightenment, enlistment, and enlargement” of the American people. And this will come only as a free church is operative in a free commonwealth—not from education *per se*, for that may be ungodly and deadly, but *Christian education* in the highest and noblest sense. This results from a free church as a blessed and swift evangel in the commonwealth.

Citizenship, therefore, though the very life and character of the commonwealth, is yet variable in quantity and quality. Its gradations and wide possibilities up and down the schedule—from best to worst and from worst to best—are

enough to startle and awaken the greatest concern. What will a man do with himself, what will a free people do with themselves—these are basal questions, and their answer almost inevitably mark and make the destiny of our republic. A good citizen is the chief asset in a free government—good in character and life, in strength and royalty of noble manhood and womanhood. Nothing else, however valuable and desirable in itself, is comparable to this, and whatever makes for good character with the individual makes for good government, for right building of the commonwealth, and for the nation's welfare.

Precisely, also, whatever corrupts, or mars, or weakens character, makes a citizenship which is weak, incompetent, easily corrupt in morals, and is for the nation's undoing. Removing the foundation is more destructive than moving the pillars. Whatsoever a nation sows, that shall the nation also reap; whatsoever a commonwealth sows, that shall the commonwealth also reap; even a free people will surely gather a harvest after the kind of their sowing. Officials in a free state reflect largely the character of those on whose franchise they come into office. A man's vote is the expression of his opinion, but oftentimes also the expression of his character, and is his highest function as a citizen in a commonwealth. Public office is a public trust; malfeas-

ance and corruption in office mean misjudgment somewhere on the part of the people, or mismanagement, or a radical want in the voter of civic righteousness—possibly all these working together and bearing fruit after their kind. A public official should never be placed beyond the reach and recall of the public voice. The sovereign choice of a sovereign people is the voice of might and rule in the commonwealth, but whether for weal or woe, for righteousness or unrighteousness, depends upon the character of her citizens in the aggregate of her citizenship.

#### THE MAKING OF CITIZENSHIP.

The church, the home, the school, the saloon—these are the four forces which, more than any others, determine the character and life of a people, and consequently shape the course of the commonwealth. They are brought together here on purpose, so as to have them all within the one field of vision at the same time. They operate within the commonwealth, multiply themselves many times over, and each one produces after its kind in character and manhood, in citizenship and in public weal or woe. But they do not have organic connection with the state, except that the saloon is under license as a restriction, danger signal and something of a safeguard. Possibly, too, some exception should be made of those schools which are under public

control, but this is not necessary for the present, as the purpose here is simply to emphasize the school as a powerful factor in the making of character and citizenship.

The school in the commonwealth, taken alone or in its connections, is itself of tremendous moment, and worthy of the best thinking of the best minds among us. It is fearful and makes one shudder to think of this great matter as the football of cheap politics. A comprehensive view will consider the question of schooling in its broadest sense, whether private or public, whether by the state or in denominational schools—and denominational schools give secular education, but under religious influence. The character of the teacher counts mightily in his teaching, and makes the atmosphere of the school room. A master in mathematics may also be a master in morals, bad or good, and a person would not like to study Greek or recite Greek in a room just vacated by one who had the smallpox. A healthy moral atmosphere is essential to healthy schooling, and healthy training for the high function and service of citizenship. Far more than we have come to realize, this question lies at the very heart of our country's welfare. There is need for high schooling, but high schooling does not come by itself, and does not *per se* yield its greatest advantage or richest and most desirable

fruit. Largely as our schools are so our republic will be.

But back of the school and the schooling, as the first and basal consideration, is the home and the commonwealth. The family came before the nation, and before the church, too, and is of God's making as his first institution. The home is the heart of the commonwealth; the family and the family life is the very life and blood of the people. And taint in the blood is taint everywhere, purity and excellence in the blood is excellence and strength throughout in character and manhood. That is the greatest commonwealth which has the largest number of homes and homes of the highest character. Water cannot rise above its level, nor a commonwealth above its citizenship, nor citizenship above the character of the people, nor the people themselves above their family life. Out of the home are the issues of life and death for the commonwealth. Great men were grown in great homes, certainly for the most part and as a rule. Cause and effect hold good as a law in mind and morals. The colonial home made the colonial soldier and statesman, through whose blood and brain the colonies were wrought into a nation. Whatever makes for good homes will surely make for good government—and conversely. The failing of home goes but little in advance of the falling empire. This is what Napoleon meant when declaring that mothers



were the nation's greatest need; and so with the other who said, the hand that rocks the cradle is the hand that rocks the world. The art of *home making* is the highest art in the nation's life, and good homes will make a happy and prosperous people, mighty in war and glorious in peace.

But what shall be said now concerning the saloon set in this group of four—the saloon and the commonwealth—the saloon in all its deadly works—the saloon in its terrible and inevitable undoing of all that is good and all that makes for good in the commonwealth? The saloon is both an institution and a business; as an institution, the most dangerous and deadly ever set up among a free people, as a business, making money for many, but wretchedness, misery, sorrow and anguish for the millions. None are safe, or beyond its awful reach, and grasp, and blighting touch. Some, admitting that “the saloon is evil and should go,” yet contend that the “liquor traffic” might remain. But that is impossible; the liquor traffic will make the saloon, for the saloon is essential to the liquor traffic. And it is a traffic that barter<sub>s</sub> in high and holy things, corrupting all it touches and seeking to touch everything. No pen has yet written the record of its deadly work in the commonwealth, but the cry of the heart and home has been heard, the handwriting is on the wall for the saloon; the day of doom

for this deadly traffic has come, and the dial plate on the nation's clock shows the near approach of high noon. May the sun stand still in the heavens until the overthrow and deliverance shall be complete, and may the ringing of the evening bell be the signal for freedom.

Over against all this, the church is God's evangel in the commonwealth. Its voice is like the voice of one crying in the wilderness, and always crying for freedom. Its message is charged with the richest that God can think, and brings the best that God can offer. It can make of the school room a mighty force for manhood; it can make homes in which God's name is written and where his honor dwells, and where men grow up trained in the fear of God and in the love of righteousness. It works as leaven works until the whole is leavened. It is God's chosen instrument for evangelizing the world, for saving the lost, for undoing the ruin which sin has wrought, for building his kingdom among men, for Christianizing the nation whose name and fame shall outshine the stars in the darkness or the splendor of the sun at noonday.

#### THE BAPTISTS FOR LIBERTY.

The church not only seeks no alliance with the commonwealth, but holds such alliance as contrary to its spirit and genius, to its mission and fundamental principles. Truth and justice de-

mands that we distinguish between "The Church" of history, and the church of Jesus Christ, which from the first until now, as an independent local body of Christian people, simple and spiritual in character and power, has been for the betterment of human governments wherever found. Until this distinction is recognized men will never see the place and power, the beauty and value of a free church in the commonwealth.

When the world speaks or thinks of the church it has in mind almost invariably, not to say inevitably, "The Church," and this often calls up the past and makes the air lurid. Baptists stand, and have always stood, for a free church in a free commonwealth—directly opposite and antagonizing "The Church" idea, which has its counterpart and expression in the Roman Catholic Church. In the records of history it is "The Church," and not the church, which has been in union with the state, and seeks even now as far as possible, and oftentimes regardless of means, to master and control the commonwealth. The so-called religious persecutions were not the product of Christianity, but were contrary to its principles and spirit. They were not even in the interest of Christianity, except when Christianity became entangled with civil powers and found expression in the corrupt and mongrel form of "The Church."

In all the long and fierce conflicts for religious liberty, until its finish on American soil, Baptists as a people were always on the side of freedom. They have stood always for liberty of conscience, for the voluntary principle in religion, for the inherent right of man to be free in his worship of God, and for his right of private judgment and freedom in thought and life. This has been, and is even to this day, the line of cleavage, of persecution and martyrdom. And our people have always stood as the champions of liberty, so that Bancroft, the historian, says, that religious liberty is a distinct trophy of the Baptists.

The baptizing of infants, as one of the chief tenets in "The Church," has perhaps caused more persecution than any other one theory and practice. But this is not strange, for infant baptism as doctrine and policy has within itself all the seed and elements of persecution—the coercive principle in religion, the disregard for the voluntary principle and personal obligation before God, and for the right of private judgment. It involves the very idea of making Christians by force. And the withstanding of this made martyrs, and Baptist people were the victims by many hundreds and thousands. No people, so far as my information goes, were ever persecuted for the practice of infant baptism, but many thousands have gone to death because they would not baptize infant children—and that, too, when the

rite is not even so much as mentioned in the New Testament. But our people fought that battle to the finish as a battle for liberty, and saw the day of triumph come. And ever in their opposition to infant baptism heretofore and now there has always been the battle cry of freedom. They pleaded then and plead now for a free church in a free state, for the individual choice in religion, forcing none but persuading all. This is the voice of the gospel, and has been its word and method from the days of John the Baptist until now.

This is the underlying principle, the undergirding of all our free institutions. And our republic, among the nations, presents as both cause and effect, a condition which has been declared impossible, namely: a sovereign church in a sovereign state—free, untrammled, working all the while for public weal, and powerful in the interest of good government. The method is as unique as the theory is effective. The church, because first rendering unto God the tribute that is due, also renders immense tribute to Cæsar—in its contribution of character and manhood in men who make and govern the commonwealth. These men serve the state not as members of the church, but as citizens of the state. Take two examples:

## ILLUSTRATION OF THE PRINCIPLE.

In the early seventies the Baptists of Kentucky in annual session of their General Association met at Frankfort, the state capital. The meetings were held in the Hall of Representatives at the capitol, and P. H. Leslie, then governor of the state, was chosen moderator of the body, and presided with beautiful grace and dignity. But all this had nothing to do with "church and state" in the sense usually understood. The Baptist house of worship was too small for the assembly, and the Hall of Representatives was offered and accepted for the purpose. Mr. Leslie, one of the best governors any state ever had, was a devout Christian and member of a Baptist church. He had been elected governor because of his high character as a citizen, and was elected moderator of the General Association because his brethren believed in him as a Christian man and a noble Baptist. But of course there was no official connection between the two offices: both cases rested on merit and worth of character, in the one case as a citizen, in the other as member in a Baptist church. He served the commonwealth not as a church member, but simply as a citizen, but no one can define and measure the power and influence which in his church life made his character and citizenship the noble and greater blessing to the commonwealth.

I recently addressed the Georgia Baptist Convention with a noble array of Baptist laymen on the platform. Among them were three men, two of whom had served the great state as governor, and the other was governor-elect. They came to that high office of state not as church members, but as citizens, and yet in the character and manhood which rooted themselves back in Christian homes, and in the training and influence of church life. It is so throughout the country. Christian men, both preachers and laymen, *are yet citizens*, and act in public affairs and cast their votes at the ballot box as members of the commonwealth with equal rights and responsibilities.

Their character and manhood make for civic righteousness and are a mighty asset in the wealth of the state. There is something fundamentally wrong, when in the halls of legislation men can declare that there is no room in American politics for the Ten Commandments, and that "the state cannot legislate on moral questions." It is false both in theory and in fact, as has been shown again and again in the federal government and in the several commonwealths. By inherent right and necessity of self-protection the state has quarantined against disease for the protection of the people. So also must it protect the citizen and his home from bad morals and the things which make for bad morals. Otherwise you abridge the function of government and

take away one of its chief elements of strength for public good. But this in no sense violates the principle of religious liberty or the policy of separation between the church and the commonwealth. State sovereignty is at its best when precluding bad morals, and prohibiting things which corrupt the body politic in corrupting the people.

Germany's great idea of citizenship, as reported to us across the waters, is threefold—"God-fearing, patriotic, self-supporting." A great business man at the head of one of the largest shoe firms of the world makes bold to hang out his motto: "God, family, shoes," and so conducts his business upon this great threefold principle. As a nation we discard Germany's method of Church and State, but the ideal of that great nation is worthy the noblest ambition and endeavor of the American Republic. The nearer we can approach to that ideal as a people, both in private and public life, the better it will be for the commonwealth. A God-fearing people make for righteousness, which always exalteth a nation; a patriotic people make for national solidarity and strength; a self-supporting people will make good homes, with happy and prosperous conditions. These three words and these qualities of citizenship stand apart, as the finest expression of the basal elements for the welfare and happiness of our people—God-fearing, patriotic, self-supporting.



If these be forgotten, or if their order be changed, then as a people we have forgotten the rock from which we were hewn, and have failed to lift up our eyes to the hills whence cometh our help. God has written it large in the fundamental principles of his word, and in the history of nations, that his plan for human government everywhere, is a free church in a free commonwealth, and that righteousness exalteth a nation.

## CHAPTER XIV.

### CHURCH LIFE AND CHURCH LOYALTY.

**W**E begin here to gather up and press with emphasis the things which have been written in the preceding chapters. The sum total of all is, Loyalty to your church in your life among men. Church life is serving God on God's plan; church loyalty is faithful adherence to God's purpose as expressed in his word. It is the life of those who are in Christ Jesus, and whose walk is the walk with God. Their membership in the church of Christ has in it the ties of kinship with him, and the bond of brotherhood through faith in him. And their loyalty is the loyalty of love, of devotion, of service, of being true to the King. And their service is the giving of themselves with talents and time and opportunity, to doing the things which the relation and the situation require. However great one is in the affairs of life, he should be as great or greater in his service for Christ and his church.

It has been taken for granted throughout the preceding pages that no one will confuse the church loyalty which we are advocating and seeking to stimulate, with the "Church authority" claimed and maintained in the Roman Catholic

Church. The one is the largest freedom, making its own choice in the highway of noble living; the other is slavery and bondage of soul, with blind adherence to rules and regulations, a slavish obedience to "the authority of The Church"—a bondage of soul from birth and sometimes even before, and reaching on beyond death and "the fires of purgatory." What we seek and urge here has no kinship with that, and even the words "church authority" have been purposely avoided, as having in them much of evil with little of good.

#### RIGHTFUL RECOGNITION OF AUTHORITY.

And yet we must keep in mind that there is an authority to be exercised by the church within itself, and to be recognized and fostered among the members. The church, as a complete body in itself, is self-governing by divine appointment—a self-imposed government with voluntary and self-regulating energy and force for its own betterment. Freedom does not mean absence of government exercise of authority, but quite the contrary, for that would mean anarchy and the undoing of God's plan and purpose. The highest freedom in the church, as everywhere else, comes from obedience to law. The matter of church discipline, for example, whether corrective or cultural, with all its difficult and delicate phases and imperative importance, is committed to the church—as is true concerning the management

and direction of all its own affairs. This is an obligation with which the church is entrusted as a body for self-government in its own behalf, and for the glory of God.

That final and even august word from the Master must impress every devout heart with the majesty of the church as he sees it, and was intended for self-governing authority—*tell it to the church*; of course he meant the local individual church as the body to be communicated with. If thy brother should trespass against thee, go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone; if he shall hear thee thou hast gained thy brother. If he will not hear thee, then take with thee one or two more; “if he shall neglect to hear them, tell it unto the church; but if he neglects to hear the church, let him be unto thee as a heathen man and a publican. Verily I say unto you, Whatsoever ye shall bind on earth, shall be bound in heaven, and whatsoever ye shall loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.” Rome overwrought these mighty words in a fearful way; but have we not underrated their significance and majesty, and so failed in the exalted conception which Jesus gave of his church and its noble mission.

Authority of this kind in the church is necessary, and is based upon the very idea and purpose of its membership. It cannot extend to those on the outside, nor is it to be hampered or in any wise meddled with by those who are not of its

membership. It shows, further the sovereignty of the church within itself, and its exalted nature and mission. It is a discipline of affectionate care, and the government and exercise of authority in a brotherhood of the noblest rank. And the recognition of this authority, divinely given and required, must always hold a high place in the best order of church life both for the individual member and for the body as a whole. Its cultivation will bring to the membership a keen and affectionate sense of church obligation, counteracting the feeling that each member is a law unto himself, and emphasizing that each member is due his allegiance to the church as a matter of conscience and conviction. It is the allegiance which one member owes to another, and which each one owes to the church as the embodiment of many members in one body. It is an obligation of high and helpful and joyous character; if disregarded and this high claim is set at naught, there will surely follow the marring and the weakening in our church life, and will do harm to the cause at large.

But loyalty is not bondage, rather the noblest function of the soul. Loyalty of brotherhood, loyalty to marriage vows, loyalty to the oath of office, to comradeship, to great trusts which have been committed to us, loyalty to the church of which we are members, and to those who are members with us, and above all, to him who is our

Lord and Saviour—there can be nothing nobler and more lofty and commanding in spirit and life. We plead not only for a free church in a free state, but also for a free member in a free church with a Bible wide open and free—the members all separate and independent, yet bound together in beautiful oneness by the mightiest One, and free in the liberty wherewith Christ maketh free.

There is not only an open Bible, but also the unrestrained privilege and ever-pressing duty for each one to search the scriptures, to know and interpret their meaning for himself. Far more so indeed than to study the firmament and mark the stars in their courses. But to follow in their course when known is imperative; yet this comes as emancipation of soul, and as leading out into the larger life. Loyalty which is of the essence of freedom, is but being true to law for love's sake, and finds expression in our recognition of God's authority in the scriptures, and in our regard for the exalted relation of church membership. It becomes, therefore, the very adornment and heroic strength of our church life, as well as its beauty and fragrance, its joy and glory.

This is no hampered life either of soul or of outward walk, but rather a wide range and fullness of scope. The soul is freest when in its walk with God and serving him in his ways. To say, "the chief end of man is to glorify God, and to enjoy him forever," is to place man at his best

and in his fullest capacity. It is the same in kind which the angels hold in their sublime worship and service about the throne. The thrice holy, when sung here by devout hearts, is as true and lofty and acceptable as the music of cherubim and seraphim when in the temple of the King they chant their everlasting song, Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts; the whole earth is full of his glory.

#### MAN'S WALK WITH GOD.

It is wonderful that man can walk in God's ways. But he can, and herein is his greatness and his kinship with God. It surely makes the soul tingle, to follow the devout astronomer in the study of the heavens, as he walks his walk among the stars, measuring their vast magnitude, tracing the pathway of their mighty sweep through space, and listening to the music of the spheres in their eternal round. But out of all comparison with that lofty fellowship and uplift of soul, is man's walk with God, made possible and actual through God's amazing condescension, love and redemptive work.

But what is man that God should be mindful of him, or the Son of man that God should visit him? And yet the amazing fact stands, and God is greatest in his grace, if the comparison can be ventured, and in his condescension when he comes down to man and communicates with man. And

man is at his best in intellect when contemplating the wonderful works of God, and at his best in heart when in love and loyalty he walks in God's ways, keeps his commandments, and fulfills God's purpose and works out God's plan concerning him.

In a true sense and in a very exalted sense, loyalty to God may find noble expression in loyalty to his church—the particular, individual church of which you are a member. This cannot be questioned, and gives to our church life a meaning of marvelous significance, and a rank of inexpressible honor and dignity. We must remember that the church is part and factor in God's plan of human redemption—the church, local and militant, as we have it here, and as it shall become triumphant and glorious, without spot or wrinkle, or any such thing—the bride of the King in his infinite glory.

When God planned, in the fullness of his love, to give his Son to die on the cross for man's redemption, he also planned in his infinite wisdom for the church to be purchased with his blood, and to become the messenger of his grace. The church, therefore, by his own appointment, holds the glorious role in the community of standing for God in Christ, and of witnessing for the kingdom of his grace among men. Hence, in the church may be seen the manifold wisdom of God, not made known in ages past, but now revealed



in the gospel, and to be more wondrously displayed when in the ages to come he shall show the exceeding riches of his grace in his kindness toward us in Christ Jesus.

This view, though so exalted, is not visionary, but very real and practical. It gives to church membership the highest possible rank and distinction, and appeals to the church member in the most powerful way for a godly walk and conversation in his living among men. It makes his church life a life for God, for Christ, for the fulfillment of his great mission in the world, while he himself becomes at once a trophy and a herald of grace. This is the source of our inspiration and power. We have not magnified either the church or church membership as we should. Church life is the form and definite expression of the Christian life. The inner life shows itself in the outer life. What one is in his church may show what he is in his heart. The stream runs scant or flush as the fountain flows. As the heart enriches in Christian experience, so also the church life flows in greater fullness, both in the things which make for the church, and in things which look beyond for the larger furtherance of the gospel in the world.

This is the basis of our plea for church loyalty and faithfulness in church life. It comes to be a very test of the genuineness of the work of grace in the heart, and of our loyalty to Christ himself.

Manifestly church loyalty may apply either to the individual member or to the church organization as a whole, and indicates one's bearing for Christ the Lord. The two are distinct one from the other, and yet they easily coalesce and will not be considered a part. It puts great emphasis upon the individual member for individual loyalty, whose life, with others, makes the life of this church as well as its character, and determines also its conduct. A pastor having taken charge of a church in which there had been some disturbance, was asked by a member in a doubtful tone, "Do you think you can do anything with this church?" He replied promptly but in a cheery way, "That depends on whether I can do anything with you." His answer holds the key to the entire situation, marks the limit of a pastor's success and usefulness, shows the line of every church problem with its probable solution, and indicates the condition and outcome in church activities. As the individual is, so the aggregate membership; and the best of leaders is valuable only so far as his members will follow.

#### THE LINES OF CHURCH LOYALTY.

Church life surely should be characterized by church loyalty. Being true and faithful to the church calls for distinct purpose, and may have distinct emphasis along several lines; (1) Bearing toward the world, as being in it, yet not of it, and

as a steadfast witness for Christ and his saving grace; (2) The management and conduct of church finances, as making them contribute to its power and efficiency; (3) As to its doctrine and doctrinal character, as holding the New Testament always in the supremacy as the one sufficient authority; (4) Concerning the social life of the church, as making it a social power for Christ in the community; (5) Keeping inviolate church vows, with faithfulness in its service and enterprises; (6) As regards its coöperation with other churches in behalf of denominational interests and standing.

This is putting the church first, and counting our membership a real power in the heart, and holding its honor and reputation as a thing worth while. And that again is only another way of saying that Christ shall reign supreme in the life, and shall be "magnified in our body." This is not calling for the impossible or the unreasonable in service, but it requires the heroic in purpose and the manly in conduct. Pass the eye back over the six items as listed above, and note the emphasis which they call for in church membership. They do not abridge, but rather enlarge the sphere of action, usefulness and happiness with one who really has it in heart to honor Christ and glorify him among men. If one does not honor the church and find it his joy and delight, he is not likely to crown Christ in his

heart as his Lord and Saviour who gave himself for the church.

The way of treachery is not the way of the followers of Christ. The heroic and true always command the attention and admiration of the world. Church membership is at once a brotherhood and a soldiery—the noblest brotherhood under the stars, and the glorious army of the King as soldiers of the cross. There is an allegiance here between member and member, such as brother owes to brother, or soldier to soldier, while each one has within himself the honor of the church and the honor of the King. The traitor and the traitorous are despised everywhere, while those who are true, brave, heroic—martyrs if need be for the sake of honor and loyalty—have the world over the plaudits of men, and the coronation of renown in the public praise.

On Capitol Hill, in the city of Nashville, is a beautiful bronze statue of heroic size, lately erected in memory of Sam Davis, as the recognition of unsullied honor and undaunted faithfulness. He was a young man, brought up in a Tennessee home not far away to the south of its capital city—such homes as grow manhood and make people great. While serving as scout in the Confederate Army during the Civil War, he was captured not far from his home within the Federal lines. He had in his possession valuable information which had been entrusted to him,

and which as a scout he was bearing away to those whom he was serving. He was tried and condemned to death as a spy, notwithstanding he wore his suit of Confederate gray when taken prisoner. For special reason the Federal authorities were much concerned to know how he came into possession of the papers, and besought him to betray his informer. They offered him life and freedom, and repeatedly held out the prize, but he steadfastly refused. And to their final offer sent to him on the scaffold, he sent back his final answer, as he stood on the trap-door: "I would die a thousand deaths before I would betray a friend." The answer will live and have the plaudits of succeeding generations, as the declaration of manhood that could not be purchased, of loyalty to country, and to friend, and to comradeship. It is said that as he was hauled away for burial some Federal soldiers removed their hats with respectful salute while the plain country wagon went by—typical of how the world will ever bear itself toward this young hero of the South.

His was a noble but an earthly charge, and he preferred death to the betrayal of his trust. But what of church members who are under oath for the King, and who have a heavenly charge to keep, and are entrusted with things of eternal moment? Many thousands have gone to their death for conscience's sake, standing true to their

vows of love and loyalty, and preferring death in any form to betrayal of their Lord or of the sacred trust committed to their care. Such heroism is worth all it costs, and is justified as the crowning of Christian manhood, and is the badge of royal distinction and renown everywhere given to Christian faith and faithfulness. There is no call for martyrs now, but there is ample room in our church life for the same true, heroic spirit which would rather die than betray.

Am I a soldier of the cross,  
A follower of the Lamb?  
And shall I fear to own his cause  
Or blush to speak his name?

Sure I must fight if I would reign,  
Increase my courage, Lord;  
I'll bear the toil, endure the pain,  
Supported by thy word.

Thy saints, in all this glorious war,  
Shall conquer though they die;  
They view the triumph from afar,  
And seize it with their eye.

When that illustrious day shall rise,  
And all thy armies shine,  
In robes of victory through the skies,  
The glory shall be thine.

And yet the martial spirit which would keep untarnished the banner of the cross, though nobly heroic in every sense, is not the highest spirit nor the most mighty in the service of our Lord and

Saviour. Church membership offers large opportunity for loyalty, and puts into its appeal all that is noble and powerful. It may be simply faithfulness in attending its services and the contribution of one's presence in the assembly; it may be the remaining true to Christ and his church without betrayal of the social life to the world; it may be in giving time and money and business management to its affairs for larger usefulness; it may be simply in holding his church life as the channel of his gifts and Christian activities in doing honor to God's plan of service; it may be in maintaining the doctrines and ordinances of the Lord, and the walking blameless in his commandments. In any or all of these one may show his bearing toward Christ as to whether he is traitorous or trustworthy.

#### LOYAL IN DOCTRINE AND LIFE.

Betrayal in doctrine is betrayal—not less so than when Judas kissed the lips of our Lord. It is fearful to see how some count doctrine as a matter of indifference for themselves and for others. False doctrine is not only dangerous for the character and life, but is a betrayal of the true. What one believes and teaches is of tremendous moment, and what bearing one gives toward false doctrine and false teachers is of deepest concern in the kingdom of God. Recall those stout words of the disciple of love: "If



there come any unto you and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into your house, neither bid him Godspeed; for he that biddeth him Godspeed, is partaker of his evil deeds." A man's doctrine may be a barrier between him and his fellows, may be a bar between him and even our hospitality; and for us to disregard it in our efforts to be generous, makes us sharers in the false teaching and its consequences, while at the same time we are betraying the faith.

And the words of Paul in his heroic vehemence are even more stout and pungent than the words of John: "But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you, than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed. As we said before, so say I again, If any man preach any other gospel unto you than that ye have received, let him be accursed." And then the Epistle of Jude exhorts with great force, that we should earnestly contend for the faith which was once for all delivered unto the saints. And yet in the face of all this, men sometimes count doctrine not worth while, and betray their doctrinal trust. Loyalty in doctrine is heroism for all ages, and calls for the spirit of the martyr now as much as for any age in the world's history. Being true in doctrine will make for strength and manhood in all the walks of life, and marks the falling or standing character whether with the



one member or with the church in its aggregate membership.

More than once in the preceding chapters Saul of Tarsus, who became Paul the preacher and apostle, was referred to as the hero in suffering, in doctrine, in services, and in lofty purpose to glorify Christ and make his name and cause great among men. We may well pause here and recall his life as an illustrious example of loyalty for Christ and his church. We may gather up some of his great utterances as the words of Christian manhood, heroic and lofty to the highest degree :

And now, behold, I go bound in the spirit to Jerusalem, not knowing the things that shall befall me there; save that the Holy Spirit witnesseth in every city, that bonds and afflictions await me.

But none of these things move me, neither count I my life dear unto myself, so that I might finish my course with joy, and the ministry, which I received of the Lord Jesus, to testify the gospel of the grace of God. . . . What mean ye to weep and to break my heart? For I am ready not to be bound only, but also to die at Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus.

Whereupon, O King Agrippa, I was not disobedient to the heavenly vision. . . . King Agrippa, believest thou the prophets? I know that thou believest. . . . I would to God, that not only thou, but all that hear me this day, were both almost, and altogether such as I am, except these bonds.

I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand. I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith. Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which

the Lord, the righteous Judge, shall give me at that day; and not to me only, but to all them also that love his appearing.

These are glorious words, and reveal the greatness of a man's inner life. They show at once the source of his power, and the direction of his purpose. He centered all in Christ, and found in him the mainspring of all his action. He was loyal to a person whom he held supreme in his heart; he was loyal to a doctrine because it was the doctrine of that person; he was loyal to a cause because it was the cause of that person; loyal to the church because it was the church of Christ. He had met the Lord Jesus in the way to Damascus; had received his ministry from the Lord Jesus; and now he was ready either to be bound at Jerusalem or to die for the name of the Lord Jesus; and in the end, when he had finished his course, his crown would be a crown of righteousness, and would come from the Lord the righteous judge. And so Christ should be magnified in his body, whether by life or by death.

Surely there is nothing nobler than this in all the walks of life. It shows to this day the highway of the King which is the highway to service and renown and coronation. At every turn in his life there was this one mighty power throbbing in his heart and compelling his life: "The love of Christ constraineth us." This is loyalty indeed, whether with that mighty man so strong in dying

as a martyr dies, or in our church life when we live for him who loved us and gave himself for us.

Heroism is heroism, and loyalty is loyalty, whether in dying or in living. To stand in our lot, to serve God in God's purpose, to make our church membership the crowning glory of our life, to hold our entrustment faithful unto the end—this is heroism, this is loyalty. It opens the way to the crown and the coronation, with the welcome plaudit of the Master: Well done, well done; enter thou into the joy of thy Lord.

## CHAPTER XV.

### THE ENRICHMENT OF CHURCH LIFE.

THE word of God sets before us high ideals for church life and the enrichment in Christian character. The ideal is ever above and beyond, but always beckons us to something higher and better—ever approaching the unapproachable. The word of exhortation from the first until now, and always unto the end, is: “Grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, . . . that ye might walk worthy of the Lord, unto all pleasing, being fruitful in every good work, and increasing in the knowledge of God; strengthened with all might, according to his glorious power, unto all patience and longsuffering with joyfulness.”

These earnest and lofty words come from two men, Simon whose surname was Peter, and Saul of Tarsus who was also called Paul—men rich in their experience of grace, and wonderfully endued with thorough training and inspiration for leadership in Christian thought. They open to us immense possibilities of attainment in Christian character and conduct—grow in grace, says the one, that ye may walk worthy of the Lord, says the other. They set before us a standard of

excellence both in what we should be and how we should live; a standard so exalted as to embarrass us, except for the assurance of being strengthened with all might according to God's glorious power, making rich in the inner graces and fruitful of good works in the outer life. In their perspective there is the widest possible range of something higher to be, and something larger to do.

Holding to their line of thought and their high ideal, we cannot state too strongly the importance of enriching the church life. This is true of the best, whether of the best church as a body or of the best individual member, and of course becomes more intense and more urgent as it scales downward to where the need is larger and more pressing. The work being done as foreign missions has perhaps its greatest need in a better condition in the home field. Every army must keep its base strong, and be all the while making it stronger. The greatest home need, moreover, is a better church condition, and this means a better membership with a better church life—the higher living in a godly walk for the outer life, and a richer heart life in the experience of grace, increasing in the knowledge of God, and growth in the knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ, unto all fruitfulness and joyousness.

## A COMMANDING OUTLOOK.

This plea for a better condition must not be considered as either a pessimistic view or depreciation of what we now have. There is enough, as one looks abroad and takes the larger view, to make him stand erect and glorify God. The onward march of God's kingdom is either triumphant, or towards the triumphant. However the appearance may be as to whirlpool and eddy, the great sweep of the stream is to the open sea where there is fullness without failure. There are more disciples of our Lord in the world today than ever before in all history. The type of personal Christian character and life, is as fine and true in every sense of the word as was ever found among those who love him, and the number of such persons is larger out of all comparison than in any former period. The martyrs could easily be counted now by thousands and hundreds of thousands, if there were occasion and need to seal their testimony in blood or flame. This vast host the world over are doing what in a sense is a mightier thing than even martyrdom, more noble and commanding than even dying for their Lord; *they are living for him*—giving themselves to him and their lives to his service, with whatever they have of time, and money, and position, personal character and influence. He is theirs in great fullness of saving grace; *they are his* with undivided

heart and undivided life to his honor and glory, and in devotion of service for the furtherance of his gospel and the advancement of his kingdom in the world. The offsets to this, though so glaring as to be easily noted by anyone, yet serve only to make this the more marked and conspicuous. "Thy kingdom come" is the prayer of more hearts, the aim and effort of more lives, than ever before since our Lord taught his disciples to pray and issued their commission for the world's conquest.

In consequence of this our Lord himself—if one may venture the remark and comparison—our Lord himself has a better hearing in the world, is better known, better represented and stands out more clearly seen, than at any former time—the King of kings and the Prince of glory. He is seen in the life, and teaching, and services, and worship of his people. More and more, as glory emerging from the darkness, he is coming out in the sight of men, and is being seen in the glory which he had with the Father before the world began. For in him, as appears more and more in his wondrous work of grace in the heart and life of men—for in him dwelleth all the fullness of the Godhead bodily, and he is the head of all principality and power. For by him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or pow-

ers; all things were created by him, and for him. And so he has the preëminence in all things; is the head of the church, and the church is his glory, shining in the world as the light in a dark place, and crowning him already as King of kings and Lord of lords.

This is our inspiration in pleading for the enrichment of the church life, and the betterment of the church condition. The quickened life of our people in their churches within the territory of the Southern Baptist Convention, has been wonderful for the last twenty-five or thirty years. It has come like a surging wave, gathering in volume and might as it came. The Convention was organized in 1845, to elicit, combine and direct the energies and benevolence of the denomination. It has become more and more through the years a rallying point for the churches and a channel for their coöperation in the furtherance of the gospel of Christ, and for building his kingdom at home and among the nations of the earth. The reflex influence of this coöperation for growth and enrichment, has been most marked, beyond all expectation and comparison—churches influencing churches, and making the Convention great in spiritual power and efficiency. And the Convention, in turn, growing and gathering strength as the churches have multiplied and increased in power, has again with each successive year poured the great vol-



ume of its cumulative life and force back into the churches, for their still greater enrichment and furtherance in all things which make for the coming of the kingdom.

#### ENRICHMENT THROUGH CO-OPERATION.

This coöperative spirit put into simple and earnest action makes enrichment in Christian character and service. This is true of churches with churches, and also of members with members in the aggregate of their individual church life. Those members who put themselves most thoroughly into their church life necessarily become the best members and are the most greatly enriched in life and good works. Likewise the churches which have put themselves most thoroughly into coöperation with other churches, in enterprises for the furtherance of the kingdom, have reaped most largely of the enrichment, until today the churches centering their life and combining their energies in the Southern Baptist Convention, fairly shine in the glory of their Lord, being strengthened by his glorious power, and made to increase more and more in fruitfulness and joyfulness. This is a conspicuous and commanding example of the wonderful power of coöperation for the enrichment of the church life. And this coöperation has gone on now for these years, increasing in spirit and service, while also there has come the correspondent increase of

enrichment with churches and individual members, until the Convention itself, as the embodiment and expression of the denominational life, came to its recent session in Louisville with rapturous and almost startling power. It surpassed all former sessions, in the work reported, in the condition of its many and mighty enterprises, in its own solidarity and stately tread for forward movement and betterment. It was enough to make the angels sing; and the hosts of our Southern Zion thanked God, took courage and made a fresh start for larger things.

But all this, inspiring as it is, can hardly be counted more than preparation. It is as one who looks out over his hundred-acre field where he has plowed and broken the earth, furrowed the field and planted his seed, and now sees what seems a barren and fruitless waste in the output of energy and the throwing away of seed; but he waits with joyous hope for the sprouting and coming of the tender blade, for the growing stalk and the ripening ear, and for the full garner when the golden harvest is gathered. What a tremendous time is yet ahead of us as a people! One can scarcely say which stirs the soul more profoundly, the wonderful things wrought in the past with all our mighty increase, or the gigantic tasks which confront us, if only as a people we can meet our responsibilities and encompass the opportunities into which God has brought us.

No people under God's stars ever saw a greater day. It is a time for largeness—largeness of soul, of hope, and outlook, of outlay, endeavor and pressing to the mark. Dr. Richard Fuller, the master of pulpit oratory, speaking before the Convention in the early seventies, and in a mighty outgo of soul with eloquence all his own, exclaimed: "When I think of what the Baptists of the South are doing, my soul stands erect and glorifies God." He must have had in mind, judging from the statistics of that time, not so much the extent of their work, as their tremendous and heroic struggle to save their institutions, and to preserve indeed their own life and existence as a people. It was a sight to see! as in those awful days of reconstruction, more terrible than the fearful war which had gone before, the Baptists of the South got to their feet, stood erect, undaunted, gathered in their might, and were triumphant in the most trying and pathetic period of all history. They gave us our day; they died that we might live; we have entered into their labors with an enrichment that stirs our hearts with joy for the present and with triumphant hopefulness for the future.

But what would the great orator say today, could his eyes see what we see, and feel the thrill that tingles through the churches of our Southern Zion? Within the territory of the Convention there are more than twenty thousand Baptist

churches; they have a membership aggregating more than two million, everyone of whom somewhere and before some Baptist church made personal profession of religion. Each one of this mighty host professed for himself that God had been gracious in the forgiveness of sin, and had dealt with his heart in special grace, professing Christ as Saviour and Lord, and promising allegiance to him, and in obedience to his command was buried with him in baptism and raised up again with him to walk in newness of life. These churches combining and coöperating in State Conventions are doing a glorious work in the several states, and have made advancement almost incredible to our eyes and ears, and yet filling our hearts with gladness. Centering and combining again for coöperation in the Southern Baptist Convention, these churches now have enterprises which represent a money investment each year of nearly one million dollars, and which in their extent well-nigh girdle the world—the sun never sets on the dominion of Southern Baptists. Again, what would the great Fuller say in the mighty and august presence, into which God has brought us, and before this highway of opportunity which God has flung wide open to us and commanded us for a forward movement? In answer, I recall the words of another great spirit who walked among us as a mighty seer in Israel, stirring our souls and pointing always to the

future. A discussion was on for some forward movement, and some one was opposing, pleading what the fathers would or would not do, when John A. Broadus, with characteristic and startling pathos, said: "Shame on us! Oh, shame on us, if standing on our fathers' shoulders we cannot see further than they saw, and reach higher!" And, we may add, do larger things than they did.

#### OBLIGATIONS ARE OPPORTUNITIES.

Surely we need to walk humbly before the Lord, to take heed unto ourselves, to get back to the individual church as God's chosen unit of cooperative power, and to the individual member in his church life. Enrichment in the churches will mean enrichment to the uttermost parts of the earth. Separate and individualize for personal development and responsibility; but elicit, combine and direct for still mightier things in the kingdom of our Lord. The experiment stations being placed by the government in different parts of the country, are for the enrichment of the soil, to beautify and increase its productive power. It is showing wonderful results in many places, and yields common good to the country at large with many advantages. It is the cultivation, however, first, of the one field, and then of the one farm, and what is done there will have its influence with other fields and other farms, with an ever-widening and intensifying effect.

Something of this kind has been going on for years with our people, members with members, and churches with churches. And we are in a glorious time—at once a season of golden harvest, and a season of fresh seed-sowing for a richer fullness in the future. The sower and the reaper crowd hard upon each other, and there is an open track between the field and the barn.

The tremendous obligations of the hour are but wonderful opportunities, as large as God's call and promise can make them. We must turn all our forces for making the present yield more largely in the future. This is true, whether we think of member or members, of church or churches. The enrichment of heart life will enrich the church life; for the one is but the expression of the other, the one being the inner fountain while the other is the outward flow. Thus it is with the individual member, so also with the church as a body in the aggregate of its membership. And this again contemplates what is done, first of all in the heart, to deepen the religious experience, to quicken the sense of church obligation, to give living and powerful emphasis to the individual conscience concerning church relation, to enlarge and intensify doctrinal conception and doctrinal conviction. Whenever these things come to their best, they at once show themselves in the life, whether for the one or the many. Work done at this point is like planting

seed in the soil, and the whole field soon becomes green and then golden, ripe and rich unto the harvest.

There are two conditions which frequently confront us, and call for special care. First, a church life which only means membership but counts for nothing—in the church but not of it; second, a church life more or less active or even vigorous, but not reinforced by a spiritual heart life—a good member, perchance, but not godly in thought and rich in grace—churchly but not Christly. These two types can be found more or less in all our churches, and pertain of course to the individual member; but they will surely affect the whole membership and are sure to tell on the character and work of the church as a body. They call for serious concern and earnest care. On the one hand they are a danger, but on the other an opportunity for effort in cultural training. Both of them need much more than we might suppose, the same thing, namely, a new and larger vision of Christ, and of what they can do for him, and a fresh experience of his grace in the heart. Whatever will make for enrichment of heart life, will surely make for enrichment of church life. And every Christian grace is open to cultivation and growth; the barren becomes fruitful, and the fruitful abounds more and more in good works and in the things which make for Christ and his cause.



## THE PASTOR ALWAYS AT THE FRONT.

This is a situation and a need in which a pastor may do his most effective work for church enrichment. His pulpit ministration, his everyday conduct with the members in their personal life, his leadership in directing the affairs of the church, his general bearing in the community—these are the things which make him the force which God intends him to be in the life of the church and in the life also of the individual members. It is his high and holy task to take heed unto himself, unto his doctrine and unto his flock who hear him, to feed the church of God which he hath purchased with his own blood.

And the member himself also is no small factor in this matter of enrichment both for himself and others. You may plow forever in an ash bank and cover it with the richest seed of the garner, but get nothing in return either for the labor or the seed. More than we suppose depends upon the member as to what he shall do for himself. Even the Spirit of God is sometimes grieved that he gets from the individual heart and in the individual life nothing in return but leaves—withered leaves. It is almost startling to think of this matter of personal responsibility. Three forces go to making character, life and destiny—environment, *one's own individual self*, and a force that shapes our end, rough hew it as we may. What is man



doing with himself—what is he himself doing with his environment—what is he doing with the influence and calls of the Spirit of God—what is he himself putting into his church and making of his membership—these are questions for *himself*, and cannot be delegated to another; they determine his church life whether for marring or making, whether for barrenness or richness.

As the source of all enrichment for members and churches, we need a fresh recognition and emphasis of the Holy Spirit's place and work in the organic life of the church. Mr. D. L. Moody when beginning his remarkable career, was admonished to "honor the Holy Spirit;" this he did, and became out of all comparison the greatest modern evangelist. He started preachers the world over to preaching the doctrines of the Holy Spirit; and so it has gone on until now, and has brought in many great seasons of revival and refreshing. But so far as my observation has gone, that has all pertained to the *individual*—the Holy Spirit's work with one person, the Spirit-filled man, or the Spirit-filled life.

#### THE SPIRIT'S WORK OF ENRICHMENT.

I am now asking, however, for something additional and beyond this, namely: the Spirit's work in the church as a body, the Spirit-filled church in its life and work. In promising the Holy Spirit Jesus said, "he shall be with you and

in you"—with you collectively as a body, in you as individual members. The church at Jerusalem was endued with power from on high in the coming of the Spirit. In the church at Ephesus the Holy Spirit made overseers and intrusted them with the care of the flock. In the church at Corinth the Holy Spirit was said to dwell as the temple of God, and the members were each fitted for baptism by the one Spirit, having been made to drink of the one Spirit, and were then baptized into the one body, and so the many were made the one body and members in particular. In the church at Antioch the Spirit said, Separate me Barnabas and Saul unto the work which I have called them. And these men went out, being sent forth by the Holy Spirit—the church acting for the Holy Spirit, and the Spirit acting in the church and through the church. There was something really majestic and even august in the act, and it illustrates a great fact in God's economy and plan of grace as operative in the churches now as then. A pastor once wrote me, that in preaching a series of sermons on the Attributes of God, he had "discovered the Third Person of the Trinity." Is not this our deepest need, to discover the Holy Spirit of God as to his place and office in the church of Christ, and as a personal power operating in *the organic life* of the church? He is surely a present power in the church, operating

not only in the members as individuals, but with the members also in the aggregate of their membership. "Let him that hath an ear, hear what the Spirit saith to the churches."

This is the source of power in church life, for the preacher in his preaching, making it effective in the hearts of the people, for the individual member in his growth in grace and his increase in knowledge and efficiency, for the church itself as a body in the management of its affairs, in the selection of its officers, whether deacons or pastor, and in directing its efforts for the furtherance of the gospel. This is the glory and power of the church in the fulfillment of its mission, and distinguishes it as the body of Christ, as the house of God, the church of God which he purchased with his own blood, the church of the living God, the ground and pillar of the truth. By the Spirit's indwelling, whether in us or with us, we are "strengthened with all might according to his glorious power, unto all patience and long suffering with joyfulness."

There are two groups of words which should command our attention concerning the Holy Spirit in his office and work in our church life. The first group is a warning like a red light ablaze at the place of danger. Resist not, grieve not, quench not the Holy Spirit of God. This is fearful as a possibility and warning, fearful enough to make the very soul quake within us

with inexpressible sense of danger and horror, for the individual but not less for the church. These words should awaken profoundest concern, and make every member question himself for himself and for the church also, as to his own place and life in the body of Christ and a member in particular. The church without the Spirit is as a body without its spirit—a corpse. No matter how well dressed or how fine the coffin—*still a corpse*, with the life gone and decay set in. How about your church life, and how about the church of your membership? This is a question for the heart. Individual responsibility and church obligation react upon each other, and greatly intensify each other. Herein lies the very source of enrichment of soul and enrichment of church life.

The other group of words are entirely different, and show the positive side of the Spirit's work in the organic life of the church, and shine like a pathway of glory. The Spirit's work in the church is, *to unify*—making many members into one body, harmonizing and symphonizing in beautiful oneness; *to edify*—feeding, nourishing, cherishing, making to grow into fullness of stature; *to electrify*—filling with power and might from on high; *to glorify*—speaking not of himself but of Christ, taking the things of Christ and showing them unto all who will see and hear. This is his glorious mission, to glorify Christ in the heart, to glorify him also in the church. No

man speaking by the Holy Spirit will call Christ accursed—detract from the glory of his character, dismantle him of the Deity of his person or the insignia of his Kingship; “no man calleth Jesus Lord but by the Holy Spirit.” But all hearts everywhere under his guidance and teaching will crown Jesus as King of kings and worship him as Lord of lords.

Surely we need to give great concern as to how we may make the most of our church life, and in turn how it may do its fullest in the enrichment of our character. And it is largely what one makes of it himself with the means which God has put at his disposal. We need to pray afresh for the coming of the Holy Spirit, and to accord him the place of his rightful due in the church and in the life, as the Third Person of the Godhead—coëqual with God the Father and God the Son. In him is the source of comfort and sanctification, and of right doctrine and right living. Honoring him as is his due will give new and exalted rating for the church of Christ, and endue it with fresh power for further conquest among the nations of the world. He will take the things of Christ and show them unto us. He will convict the world of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment to come. In him men shall be born again, and then more and more the kingdom of our Lord shall come. For in the ever blessed energy and efficiency of his Spirit in the hearts of

men, God works in us to will and to do according to his good pleasure, while we work out our salvation with fear and trembling. Herein is the triumph of the cross and the coronation of the Crucified One.

This is for the glory of God in the church through Christ Jesus. Where the Holy Spirit is, whether in the one heart or the one church, there is fullness of power, of joyfulness, of fruitfulness in the kingdom of God among men. This means richness in Christian experience, richness also in church life, richness in glorifying Christ in the body of Christ. Out of this will come the church of power for the world's conquest; and out of this, too, will come "the glorious church, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing," as a bride adorned for her husband, the King all glorious and triumphant; and out of this again as the final and mighty consummation of what grace has wrought for fallen man, will come "the general assembly and church of the first-born, which are written in heaven," a mighty throng which no man can number, and who have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the lamb; where Jesus, the mediator of the new covenant with the banner of the cross, shall reign as King of saints with universal empire.

## THE PRAYER FOR ENRICHMENT.

THE prayer in behalf of the Ephesian church may well be counted a fitting prayer as this volume comes to an end, and as the standing prayer in every church throughout the ages for its enrichment and crowning glory :

For this cause I bow my knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named, that he would grant you, according to the riches of his glory, to be strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man.

That Christ may dwell in your heart by faith; that ye being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend with all saints, what is the breadth and length, and depth, and height; and to know the love of Christ which passeth knowledge, that ye might be filled with all the fullness of God.

Now unto him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us, unto him be glory in the church by Jesus Christ, throughout all ages, world without end. *Amen,*

AND AMEN.

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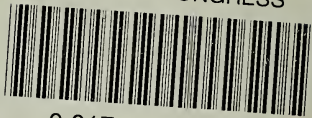
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